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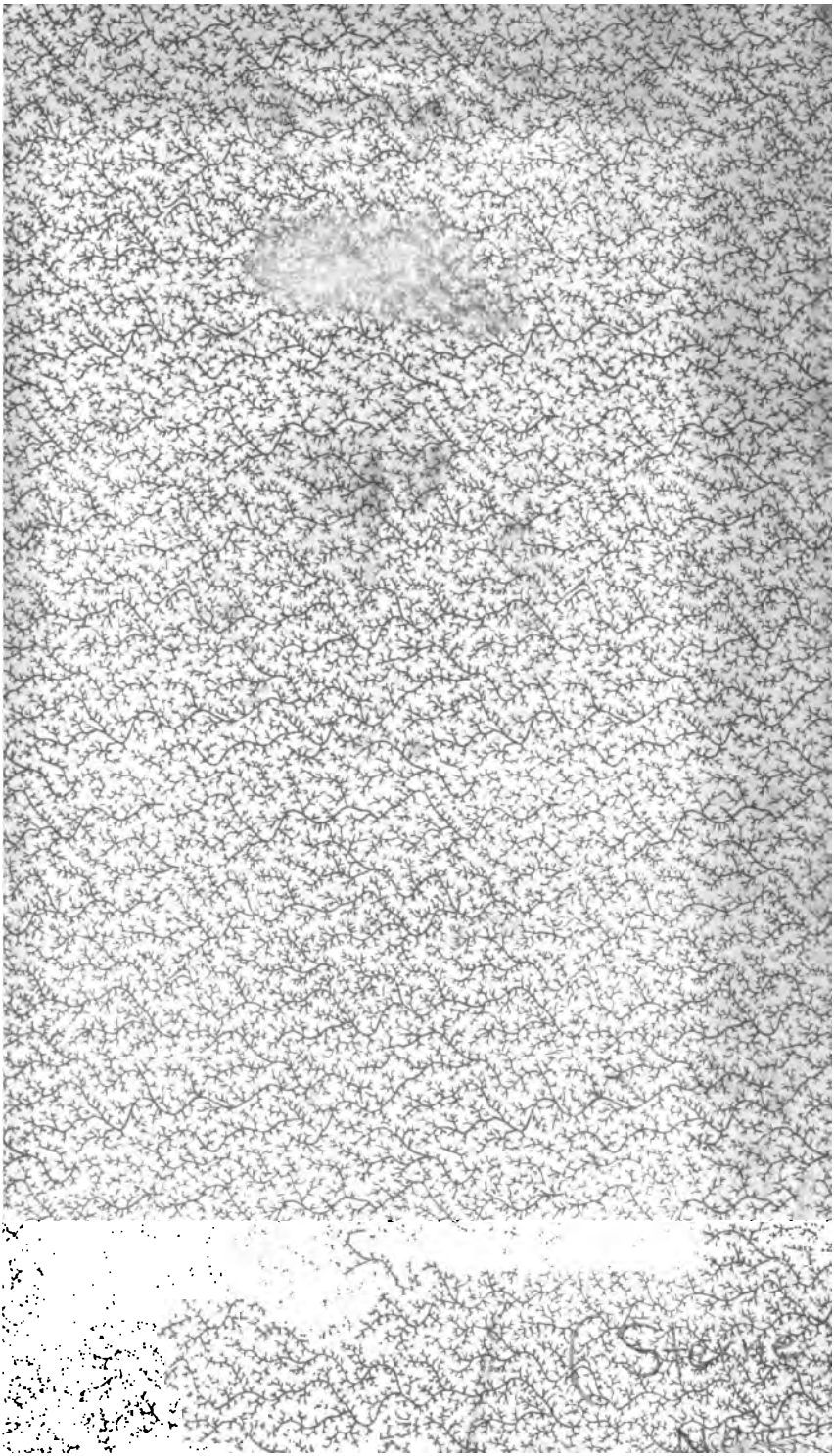

THE

WORKS

OF

LAURENCE STERNE.

VOL. III.

SERMONS:

I. TO XXXII.

Vol. III. p. 26.

T. Stothard del.t

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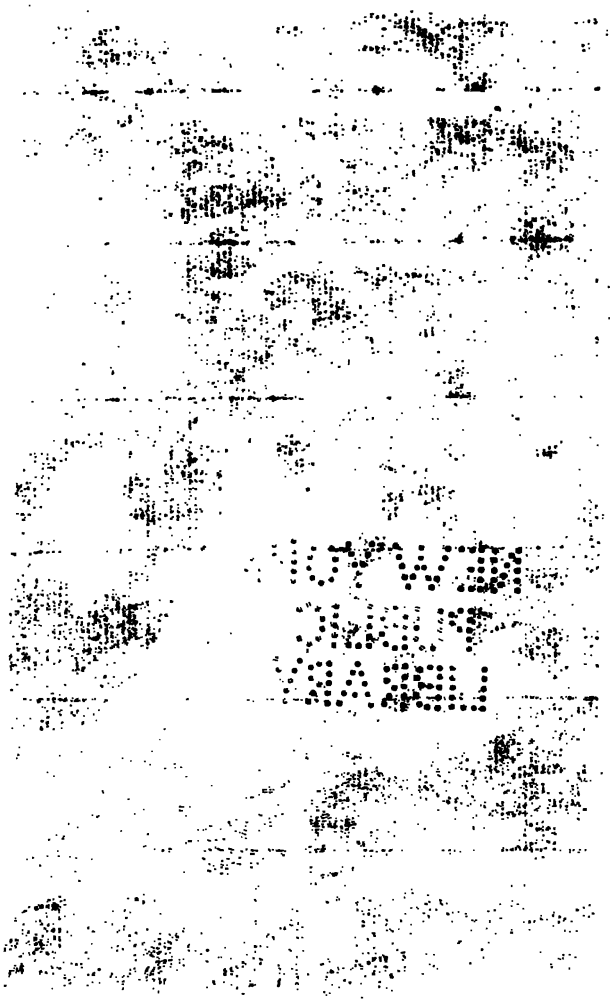

THE

WORKS

OF

LAURENCE STERNE;

IN FOUR VOLUMES:

CONTAINING

THE LIFE AND OPINIONS

OF TRISTRAM SHANDY, GENT.;

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

THROUGH FRANCE AND ITALY;

SERMONS,—LETTERS, &c.

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

LONDON:

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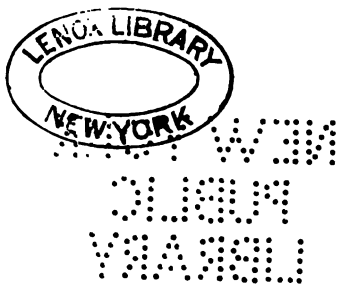

Luke Hansard, Printer,
Great Turnstile, Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

PREFACE.

(TO THE FIRST EDITION.)

THE Sermon which gave riſe to the publication of theſe, having being offered to the world as a Sermon of *Yorick*'s, I hope the moſt ſerious reader will find nothing to offend him, in my continuing theſe volumes under the ſame title: leſt it ſhould be otherwiſe, I have added a ſecond title-page with the real name of the Author—the firſt will ſerve the bookſeller's purpoſe, as *Yorick*'s name is poſſibly of the two the more known;—and the ſecond will eaſe the minds of thoſe who ſee a jeſt, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jeſt was meant.

I ſuppoſe it is needleſs to inform the Public, that the reaſon of printing theſe Sermons ariſes altogether from the favourable reception which the Sermon given as a ſample of them in TRISTRAM SHANDY met with from the world;—That Sermon was printed by itſelf ſome years ago, but could find neither purchaſers nor readers; ſo that I apprehended little hazard from a promiſe I made upon its republication, "That if the "Sermon was liked, theſe ſhould be alſo at the world's ſervice;" which, to be as good as my word, they here are, and I pray to GOD, they may do it the ſervice I wiſh. I have little to ſay in their behalf, except this, that not one of them was compoſed with any thoughts of being printed;—they have been haſtily written, and carry the marks of it along with them.—This may

be no recommendation;—I mean it however as ſuch; for as the Sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and thoſe kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I truſt they will be no leſs felt, or worſe received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head. I have nothing to add, but that the reader, upon old and beaten ſubjects, muſt not look for many new thoughts—'tis well if he has new language in three or four paſſages; where he has neither the one nor the other, I have quoted the author I made free with.—There are ſome other paſſages where I ſuſpect I may have taken the ſame liberty,—but 'tis only ſuſpicion, for I do not remember it is ſo, otherwiſe I ſhould have reſtored them to their proper owners; ſo that I put in here more as a general saving than from a conſciouſneſs of having much to anſwer for upon that ſcore. In this however, and every thing elſe which I offer or ſhall offer to the world, I reſt, with a heart much at eaſe, upon the protection of the humane and candid, from whom I have received many favours, for which I beg leave to return them thanks——thanks.

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SERMONS

BY

LAURENCE STERNE, A. M.

SERMON I.

INQUIRY AFTER HAPPINESS.

PSALM IV. 6.

There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good?—Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

THE great purſuit of man is after happineſs; it is the firſt and ſtrongeſt deſire of his nature;—in every ſtage of his life he ſearches for it as for hid treaſure;—courts it under a thouſand different ſhapes,—and, though perpetually diſappointed,—ſtill perſiſts,—runs after, and enquires for it afreſh,—aſks every paſſenger who comes in his way, *Who will ſhew him any good?*—who will aſſiſt him in the attainment of it, or direct him to the diſcovery of this great end of all his wiſhes?

He is told by one, to ſearch for it among the more gay and uſeful pleaſures of life, in ſcenes of mirth and ſprightlineſs, where Happineſs ever preſides, and is ever to be known by the joy and laughter which he will at once ſee painted in her looks.

A ſecond, with a graver aſpect, points out to the coſtly dwellings which pride and extravagance have erected;—tells the enquirer that the object he is in ſearch of inhabits there;—that Happineſs lives only in company with the great, in the midſt of much

pomp and outward ſtate;—that he will eaſily find her out by the coat of many colours ſhe has on, and the great luxury and expence of equipage and furniture with which ſhe always ſits ſurrounded.

The miſer bleſſes God!—wonders how any one would miſlead, and wilfully put him upon ſo wrong a ſcent,—convinces him that happineſs and extravagance never inhabited under the ſame roof;—that, if he would not be diſappointed in his ſearch, he muſt look into the plain and thrifty dwelling of the prudent man, who knows and underſtands the worth of money, and cautiouſly lays it up againſt an evil hour: that it is not the proſtitution of wealth upon the paſſions, or the parting with it at all, that conſtitutes happineſs;—but that it is the keeping it together, and the *having* and *holding* it faſt to him and his heirs for ever, which are the chief attributes that form this great idol of human worſhip, to which ſo much incenſe is offered up every day.

The epicure, though he eaſily rectifies ſo groſs a miſtake, yet, at the ſame time, he plunges him, if poſſible, into a greater; for, hearing the object of his purſuit to be happineſs, and knowing of no other happineſs than what is ſeated immediately in his ſenſes,—he ſends the enquirer there, tells him 'tis in vain to ſearch elſewhere for it than where Nature herſelf has placed it,—in the indulgence and gratification of the appetites, which are given us for that end: and, in a word,

word,—if he will not take his opinion in the matter,—he may truſt the word of a much wiſer man, who has aſſured us, That there is nothing better in this world, than that a man ſhould eat and drink, and rejoice in his works, and make his ſoul enjoy good in his labour;—for that is his portion.

To reſcue him from this brutal experiment, Ambition takes him by the hand, and carries him into the world,—ſhews him all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them,—points out the many ways of advancing his fortune, and raiſing himſelf to honour;—lays before his eyes all the charms and bewitching temptations of power, and aſks if there can be any happineſs in this world like that of being careſſed, courted, flattered, and followed?

To cloſe all,—the philoſopher meets him buſtling in the full career of this purſuit,—ſtops him,—tells him, if he is in ſearch of happineſs, he is far gone out of his way:—that this deity has long been baniſhed from noiſe and tumults, where there was no reſt found for her, and was fled into ſolitude far from all commerce of the world; and, in a word, if he would find her, he muſt leave this buſy and intriguing ſcene, and go back to that peaceful ſcene of retirement and books, from which he at firſt ſet out.

In this circle too often does man run, tries all experiments, and generally ſits down weary and diſſatisfied with them all at laſt,—in utter deſpair of ever accompliſhing what

he wants,—nor knowing what to truſt to after ſo many diſappointments,—or where to lay the fault, whether in the incapacity of his own nature, or the inſufficiency of the enjoyments themſelves.

In this uncertain and perplex'd ſtate,—without knowledge which way to turn or where to betake ourſelves for refuge,—ſo often abuſed and deceived by the many who pretend thus to ſhew us any good,—Lord! ſays the Pſalmiſt, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us! Send us ſome rays of thy grace and heavenly wiſdom, in this benighted ſearch after happineſs, to direct us ſafely to it! O God! let us not wander for ever without a guide, in this dark region, in endleſs purſuit of our miſtaken good, but enlighten our eyes that we ſleep not in death;—open to them the comforts of thy holy word and religion;—lift up the light of thy countenance upon us,—and make us know the joy and ſatisfaction of living in the true faith and fear of thee, which only can carry us to this haven of reſt where we would be,—that ſure haven, where true joys are to be found, which will at length not only anſwer all our expectations,—but ſatisfy the moſt unbounded of our wiſhes for ever and ever.

The words thus opened, naturally reduce the remaining part of the diſcourſe under two heads.—The firſt part of the verſe,—"There "be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any "good?"—To make ſome reflections upon the inſufficiency of moſt of our enjoyments towards

towards the attainment of happineſs, upon ſome of the moſt received plans on which 'tis generally ſought.

The examination of which will lead us up to the ſource and true ſecret of all happineſs, ſuggeſted to us in the latter part of the verſe; —"Lord! lift thou up the light of thy coun- "tenance upon us,"—that there can be no real happineſs without religion and virtue, and the aſſiſtance of God's grace and Holy Spirit to direct our lives in the true purſuit of it.

Let us enquire into the diſappointments of human happineſs, on ſome of the moſt received plans on which 'tis generally ſought for and expected by the bulk of mankind.

There is hardly any ſubject more exhauſted, or which, at one time or other, has afforded more matter for argument and declamation than this one, of the inſufficiency of our enjoyments. Scarce a reformed ſenſualiſt, from Solomon down to our own days, who has not in ſome fits of repentance or diſappointment uttered ſome ſharp reflection upon the emptineſs of human pleaſure, and of the vanity of vanities which diſcovers itſelf in all the purſuits of mortal man.—But the miſchief has been, that, though ſo many good things have been ſaid, they have generally had the fate to be conſidered either as the overflowings of diſguſt from ſated appetites, which could no longer reliſh the pleaſures of life; or, as the declamatory opinions of recluſe and ſplenetic men, who had never taſted them at all, and, conſequently, were thought no judges of the

from anſwering your expectations of happineſs, 'twas well if you eſcaped without pain.—That, in every experiment he had tried, he had found more bitter than ſweet; and, for the little pleaſure one could ſnatch,—it too often left a terrible ſting behind it: beſides, did the balance lie on the other ſide, he would tell you there could be no true ſatisfaction where a life runs on in ſo giddy a circle, out of which a wiſe man ſhould extricate himſelf as ſoon as he can, that he may begin to look forwards:—that it becomes a man of character and conſequence to lay aſide childiſh things, to take care of his intereſts, to eſtabliſh the fortune of his family, and place it out of want and dependence: and, in a word, if there is ſuch a thing as happineſs upon earth, it muſt conſiſt in the accompliſhment of this;—and, for his own part, if God ſhould proſper his endeavours ſo as to be worth ſuch a ſum, or to be able to bring ſuch a point to bear,—he ſhall be one of the happieſt of the ſons of men.—In full aſſurance of this, on he drudges,—plots,—contrives,—riſes early,—late takes reſt, and eats the bread of carefulneſs, till, at length, by hard labour and perſeverance, he has reached, if not outgone, the object he had firſt in view.—When he has got thus far,—if he is a plain and ſincere man, he will make no ſcruple to acknowledge truly what alteration he has found in himſelf.—If you aſk him,—he will tell you that his imagination painted ſomething before his eyes, the reality of which

he has not yet attained to: that, with all the accumulation of his wealth, he neither lives the merrier, ſleeps the ſounder, or has leſs care and anxiety upon his ſpirits than at his firſt ſetting out.

Perhaps, you'll ſay, ſome dignity, honour, or title, only is wanting:—Oh! could I accompliſh that, as there would be nothing left then for me to wiſh, good God! how happy ſhould I be! 'Tis ſtill the ſame;—the dignity or title,—though they crown his head with honour,—add not one cubit to his happineſs.—Upon ſumming up the account, all, all is found to be ſeated merely in the imagination.—The faſter he has purſued, the faſter the phantom flies before him;—and, to uſe the ſatiriſt's compariſon of the chariot-wheels,—haſte as they will, they muſt for ever keep the ſame diſtance.

But what? though I have been thus far diſappointed in my expectations of happineſs from the poſſeſſion of riches,—"Let me try "whether I ſhall not meet with it in the "ſpending and faſhionable enjoyment of "them."

Behold! I will get me down, and make me great works, and build me houſes, and plant me vineyards, and make me gardens and pools of water; and I will get me ſervants and maidens; and whatſoever my eyes deſire, I will not keep from them.

In proſecution of this,—he drops all painful purſuits,—withdraws himſelf from the buſy part of the world,—realizes,—pulls down

down,—builds up again;—buys ſtatues, pictures,—plants—and plucks up by the roots,—levels mountains—and fills up vallies,—turns rivers into dry ground, and dry ground into rivers;—ſays unto this man, Go, and he goeth; and unto another, Do this, and he doeth it;—and whatſoever his ſoul luſteth after of this kind, he withholds not from it. When every thing is thus planned by himſelf, and executed according to his wiſh and direction, ſurely he is arrived to the accompliſhment of his wiſhes, and has got to the ſummit of all human happineſs?—Let the moſt fortunate adventurers in this way anſwer the queſtion for him, and ſay,—how often it ariſes higher than a bare and ſimple amuſement,—and well, if you can compound for that,—ſince, 'tis often purchaſed at ſo high a price, and ſo ſoured by a mixture of other incidental vexations, as to become too often a work of repentance, which, in the end, will extort the ſame ſorrowful confeſſion from him, which it did from Solomon in the like caſe,—"Lo! "I looked on all the works that my hands "had wrought, and on the labour that I had "laboured to do,—and behold all was vanity "and vexation of ſpirit,—and there was no "profit to me under the ſun."

To inflame this account the more,—it would be no miracle, if, upon caſting it up, he has gone farther lengths than he firſt intended, run into expences which have entangled his fortune, and brought himſelf into ſuch difficulties as to make way for the laſt experi-

experiment he can try,—and that is, to turn miſer, with no happineſs in view but what is to riſe out of the little deſigns of a ſordid mind, ſet upon ſaving and ſcraping up all he has injudiciouſly ſpent.

In this laſt ſtage,—behold him a poor trembling wretch, ſhut up from all mankind, ſinking into utter contempt; ſpending careful days and ſleepleſs nights in purſuit of what a narrow and contracted heart can never enjoy;—and let us here leave him to the conviction he will one day find,—that there is no end of his labour,—that his eyes will never be ſatisfied with riches, or will ſay,—For whom do I labour and bereave myſelf of reſt?—This is alſo a ſore travel.

I believe this is no uncommon picture of the diſappointments of human life,—and the manner our pleaſures and enjoyments ſlip from under us in every ſtage of our life. And though I would not be thought by it, as if I was denying the reality of pleaſures, or diſputing the being of them, any more than one would the reality of pain,—yet I muſt obſerve on this head, that there is a plain diſtinction to be made betwixt pleaſure and happineſs: for, though there can be no happineſs without pleaſure,—yet the reverſe of the propoſition will not hold true.—We are ſo made, that, from the common gratifications of our appetites, and the impreſſions of a thouſand objects, we ſnatch the one, like a tranſient gleam, without being ſuffered to taſte the other

other, and enjoy the perpetual ſunſhine and fair weather which conſtantly attend it. This, I contend, is only to be found in religion,—in the conſciouſneſs of virtue,—and the ſure and certain hopes of a better life, which brightens all our proſpects, and leaves no room to dread diſappointments,—becauſe the expectation of it is built upon a rock, whoſe foundations are as deep as thoſe of Heaven and Hell.

And though, in our pilgrimage through this world,—ſome of us may be ſo fortunate as to meet with ſome clear fountains by the way, that may cool, for a few moments, the heat of this great thirſt of happineſs,—yet our Saviour, who knew the world, though he enjoyed but little of it, tells us, that whoſoever drinketh of this water will thirſt again:—and we all find, by experience, it is ſo, and by reaſon, that it always muſt be ſo.

I conclude with a ſhort obſervation upon Solomon's evidence in this caſe.

Never did the buſy brain of a lean and hectic chemiſt ſearch for the philoſopher's ſtone with more pains and ardour than this great man did after happineſs. He was one of the wiſeſt enquirers into Nature;—had tried all her powers and capacities, and after a thouſand vain ſpeculations and vile experiments, he affirmed, at length, it lay hid in no one thing he had tried. Like the chemiſt's projections, all had ended in ſmoke, or, what was worſe, in vanity and vexation of ſpirit.

—The

—The concluſion of the whole matter was this,—That he adviſes every man who would be happy, to fear God and keep his commandments.

SERMON II.

THE HOUSE OF FEASTING AND THE HOUSE OF MOURNING DESCRIBED.

ECCLES. VII. 2, 3.

It is better to go to the houſe of mourning than to the houſe of feaſting.

THAT I deny;—but let us hear the wiſe man's reaſoning upon it,—" for that *is* the " end of all men, and the living *will* lay it " to *his* heart: ſorrow is better than laughter:" —for a crack-brain'd order of Carthuſian monks, I grant, but not for men of the world. For what purpoſe, do you imagine, has God made us? for the ſocial ſweets of the well-watered vallies, where he has planted us, or for the dry and diſmal deſert of a Sierra Morena? Are the ſad accidents of life, and the uncheery hours which perpetually overtake us, are they not enough, but we muſt ſally forth in queſt of them,—belye our own hearts, and ſay, as our text would have us, that they are better than thoſe of joy? Did the Beſt of Beings ſend us into the world for this end,—to go weeping through it,—to vex and ſhorten a life ſhort and vexatious enough already? Do you think, my good preacher, that he who is infinitely happy, can envy us our enjoyments? or that a Being ſo infinitely kind,

kind, would grudge a mournful traveller the ſhort reſt and refreſhments neceſſary to ſupport his ſpirits through the ſtages of a weary pilgrimage? or that he would call him to a ſevere reckoning, becauſe in his way he had haſtily ſnatched at ſome little fugacious pleaſures, merely to ſweeten this uneaſy journey of life, and reconcile him to the ruggedneſs of the road, and the many hard joſtlings he is ſure to meet with? Conſider, I beſeech you, what proviſion and accommodation the Author of our being has prepared for us, that we might not go on our way ſorrowing:—how many caravanſeras of reſt!—what powers and faculties he has given us for taking it!—what apt objects he has placed in our way to entertain us!—ſome of which he has made ſo fair, ſo exquiſitely fitted for this end, that they have power over us, for a time, to charm away the ſenſe of pain, to cheer up the dejected heart under poverty and ſickneſs, and make it go and remember its miſeries no more.

I will not contend, at preſent, againſt this rhetoric; I would chuſe rather for a moment to go on with the allegory, and ſay we are travellers, and, in the moſt affecting ſenſe of that idea, that, like travellers, though upon buſineſs of the laſt and neareſt concern to us, we may ſurely be allowed to amuſe ourſelves with the natural or artificial beauties of the country we are paſſing through, without reproach of forgetting the main errand

we are ſent upon; and if we can ſo order it, as not to be led out of the way, by the variety of proſpects, edifices, and ruins which ſolicit us, it would be a nonſenſical piece of ſaint-errantry to ſhut our eyes.

But let us not loſe ſight of the argument in purſuit of the ſimile.

Let us remember, various as our excurſions are—that we have ſtill ſet our faces towards Jeruſalem:—that we have a place of reſt and happineſs, towards which we haſten; and that the way to get there is not ſo much to pleaſe our hearts, as to improve them in virtue;—that mirth and feaſting are uſually no friends to atchievements of this kind,—but that a ſeaſon of affliction is, in ſome ſort, a ſeaſon of piety,—not only becauſe our ſufferings are apt to put us in mind of our ſins, but that by the check and interruption which they give to our purſuits, they allow us what the hurry and buſtle of the world too often deny us;—and that is, a little time for reflection, which is all that moſt of us want, to make us wiſer and better men:—that at certain times it is ſo neceſſary a man's mind ſhould be turned towards itſelf, that rather than want occaſions, he had better purchaſe them at the expence of his preſent happineſs.—He had better, as the text expreſſes it, "go to "the houſe of mourning," where he will meet with ſomething to ſubdue his paſſions, than to the houſe of feaſting, where the joy and gaiety of the place is likely to excite them.—

That

That whereas the entertainments and careſſes of the one place expoſe his heart and lay it open to temptations;—the ſorrows of the other defend it, and as naturally ſhut them from it. So ſtrange and unaccountable a creature is man! he is ſo framed, that he cannot but purſue happineſs;—and yet, unleſs he is made ſometimes miſerable, how apt is he to miſtake the way which can only lead him to the accompliſhment of his own wiſhes!

This is the full force of the wiſe man's declaration.—But to do farther juſtice to his words, I will endeavour to bring the ſubject ſtill nearer.—For which purpoſe, it will be neceſſary to ſtop here, and take a tranſient view of the two places here referred to,—the houſe of mourning, and the houſe of feaſting. Give me leave, therefore, I beſeech you, to recal both of them for a moment to your imaginations, that from thence I may appeal to your hearts how faithfully, and upon what good grounds, the effects and natural operations of each upon our minds are intimated in the text.

And, firſt, let us look into the houſe of feaſting.

And here, to be as fair and candid as poſſible in the deſcription of this, we will not take it from the worſt originals, ſuch as are opened merely for the ſale of virtue, and ſo calculated for the end, that the diſguiſe each is under not only gives power ſafely to drive

on the bargain, but ſafely to carry it into execution too.

This we will not ſuppoſe to be the caſe;—nor let us even imagine the houſe of feaſting to be ſuch a ſcene of intemperance and exceſs as the houſe of feaſting does often exhibit;—but let us take it from one, as little exceptionable as we can,—where there is, or at leaſt appears, nothing really criminal,—but where every thing ſeems to be kept within the viſible bounds of moderation and ſobriety.

Imagine then ſuch a houſe of feaſting, where, either by conſent or invitation, a number of each ſex is drawn together, for no other purpoſe but the enjoyment and mutual entertainment of each other: which, we will ſuppoſe, ſhall ariſe from no other pleaſures but what cuſtom authorizes, and religion does not abſolutely forbid.

Before we enter,—let us examine, what muſt be the ſentiments of each individual previous to his arrival, and we ſhall find, that however they may differ from one another in tempers and opinions, that every one ſeems to agree in this:—That as he is going to a houſe dedicated to joy and mirth, it was fit he ſhould diveſt himſelf of whatever was likely to contradict that intention, or be inconſiſtent with it.—That for this purpoſe, he had left his cares,—his ſerious thoughts,—and his moral reflections behind him, and was come forth from home with only ſuch diſpoſitions and gaiety of heart as ſuited the occaſion,

occaſion, and promoted the intended mirth and jollity of the place. With this preparation of mind, which is as little as can be ſuppoſed, ſince it will amount to no more than a deſire in each to render himſelf an acceptable gueſt,—let us conceive them entering into the houſe of feaſting with hearts ſet looſe from grave reſtraints, and open to the expectations of receiving pleaſure. It is not neceſſary, as I premiſed, to bring intemperance into this ſcene,—or to ſuppoſe ſuch an exceſs in the gratification of the appetites as ſhall ferment the blood and ſet the deſires in a flame.—Let us admit no more of it, therefore, than will gently ſtir them, and fit them for the impreſſions which ſo benevolent a commerce will naturally excite. In this diſpoſition, thus wrought upon beforehand, and already improved to this purpoſe,—take notice how mechanically the thoughts and ſpirits riſe,—how ſoon and inſenſibly they are got above the pitch and firſt bounds which cooler hours would have marked.

When the gay and ſmiling aſpect of things has begun to leave the paſſages to a man's heart thus thoughtleſsly unguarded;—when kind and careſſing looks of every object without, that can flatter his ſenſes, have conſpired with the enemy within, to betray him, and put him off his defence;—when Muſic likewiſe hath lent her aid, and tried her power upon the paſſions;—when the voice of ſinging men, and the voice of ſinging women, with the ſound of the viol

broke in upon his ſoul, and in ſome tender notes have touched the ſecret ſprings of rapture,—that moment let us diſſect and look into his heart:—ſee how vain! how weak! how empty a thing it is! Look through its ſeveral receſſes,—thoſe pure manſions formed for the reception of innocence and virtue:—ſad ſpectacle! Behold thoſe fair inhabitants now diſpoſſeſſed,—turned out of their ſacred dwelling, to make room,—for what?—at the beſt for levity and indiſcretion,—perhaps for folly;—it may be for more impure gueſts, which poſſibly, in ſo general a riot of the mind and ſenſes, may take occaſion to enter unſuſpected at the ſame time.

In a ſcene and diſpoſition thus deſcribed,—can the moſt cautious ſay,—Thus far ſhall my deſires go,—and no farther? or will the cooleſt and moſt circumſpect ſay, when pleaſure has taken full poſſeſſion of his heart, that no thought nor purpoſe ſhall ariſe there which he would have concealed?—In thoſe looſe and unguarded moments, the imagination is not always at command;—in ſpite of reaſon and reflection, it will forcibly carry him ſometimes whither he would not,—like the unclean ſpirit, in the parent's ſad deſcription of his child's caſe, which took him, and oft-times caſt him into the fire to deſtroy him; and whereſoever it taketh him it teareth him, and hardly departeth from him.

But this, you'll ſay, is the worſt account of what the mind may ſuffer here.

Why

Why may we not make more favourable ſuppoſitions?—That numbers, by exerciſe and cuſtom to ſuch encounters, learn gradually to deſpiſe and triumph over them;—that the minds of many are not ſo ſuſceptible of warm impreſſions, or ſo badly fortified againſt them, that pleaſure ſhould eaſily corrupt or ſoften them;—that it would be hard to ſuppoſe, of the great multitudes which daily throng and preſs into this houſe of feaſting, but that numbers come out of it again with all the innocence with which they entered;—and that, if both ſexes are included in the computation, what *fair* examples ſhall we ſee of many of ſo pure and chaſte a turn of mind,—that the houſe of feaſting, with all its charms and temptations, was never able to excite a thought, or awaken an inclination which virtue need to bluſh at,—or which the moſt ſcrupulous conſcience might not ſupport. God forbid we ſhould ſay otherwiſe:—no doubt, numbers of all ages eſcape unhurt, and get off this dangerous ſea without ſhipwreck. Yet are they not to be reckoned amongſt the moſt fortunate adventurers;—and though one would not abſolutely prohibit the attempt, or be ſo cynical as to condemn every one who tries it, ſince there are ſo many, I ſuppoſe, who cannot well do otherwiſe, and whoſe condition and ſituation in life unavoidably force them upon it,—yet we may be allowed to deſcribe this fair and flattering coaſt,—we may point out the unſuſpected dangers

of it, and warn the unwary paſſenger where they lie. We may ſhew him what hazards his youth and inexperience will run, how little he can gain by the venture, and how much wiſer and better it would be (as is implied in the text) to ſeek occaſions rather to improve his little ſtock of virtue, than incautiouſly expoſe it to ſo unequal a chance, where the beſt he can hope is to return ſafe with what treaſure he carried out,—but where, probably, he may be ſo unfortunate as to loſe it all,—be loſt himſelf,—and undone for ever.

Thus much for the houſe of feaſting; which, by the way, though generally open at other times of the year throughout the world, is ſuppoſed, in Chriſtian countries, now everywhere to be univerſally ſhut up. And, in truth, I have been more full in my cautions againſt it, not only as reaſon requires,—but in reverence to this ſeaſon *, wherein our church exacts a more particular forbearance and ſelf-denial in this point, and thereby adds to the reſtraints upon pleaſure and entertainments which this repreſentation of things has ſuggeſted againſt them already.

Here, then, let us turn aſide from this gay ſcene; and ſuffer me to take you with me for a moment to one much fitter for your meditation. Let us go into the houſe of mourning, made ſo by ſuch afflictions as have been brought in, merely, by the common croſs accidents and diſaſters to which our condition is

* Preached in Lent.

expoſed;

expoſed;—where, perhaps, the aged parents ſit broken-hearted, pierced to their ſouls with the folly and indiſcretion of a thankleſs child, —the child of their prayers, in whom all their hopes and expectations centered.—Perhaps a more affecting ſcene:—A virtuous family lying pinched with want, where the unfortunate ſupport of it, having long ſtruggled with a train of misfortunes, and bravely fought up againſt them,—is now piteouſly borne down at the laſt,—overwhelmed with a cruel blow which no forecaſt or frugality could have prevented!—O God! look upon his afflictions! —Behold him diſtracted with many ſorrows, ſurrounded with the tender pledges of his love, and the partner of his cares,—without bread to give them! unable, from the remembrance of better days, to dig;—to beg, aſhamed.

When we enter into the houſe of mourning, ſuch as this, it is impoſſible to inſult the unfortunate, even with an improper look. —Under whatever levity and diſſipation of heart ſuch objects catch our eyes,—they catch likewiſe our attentions, collect and call home our ſcatter'd thoughts, and exerciſe them with wiſdom. A tranſient ſcene of diſtreſs, ſuch as is here ſketched, how ſoon does it furniſh materials to ſet the mind at work! how neceſſarily does it engage it to the conſideration of the miſeries and misfortunes, the dangers and calamities to which the life of man is ſubject! By holding up ſuch a glaſs before it, it forces the mind to ſee and reflect upon

upon the vanity,—the periſhing condition and uncertain tenure of every thing in this world. From reflections of this ſerious caſt, how inſenſibly do the thoughts carry us farther!—and, from conſidering what we are, —what kind of world we live in, and what evils befal us in it, how naturally do they ſet us to look forwards at what poſſibly we ſhall be!—for what kind of world we are intended, —what evils may befal us there, and what proviſion we ſhould make againſt them here, whilſt we have time and opportunity.

If theſe leſſons are ſo inſeparable from the houſe of mourning here ſuppoſed,—we ſhall find it a ſtill more inſtructive ſchool of wiſdom when we take a view of the place in that more affecting light to which the wiſe man ſeems to confine it in the text; in which, by the houſe of mourning, I believe, he means that particular ſcene of ſorrow, where there is lamentation and mourning for the dead.

Turn in hither, I beſeech you, for a moment. Behold a dead man ready to be carried out; the only ſon of his mother, and ſhe a widow! Perhaps a more affecting ſpectacle: —a kind and indulgent father of a numerous family, lies breathleſs;—ſnatched away in the ſtrength of his age;—torn in an evil hour from his children and the boſom of a diſconſolate wife!

Behold much people of the city gathered together to mix their tears, with ſettled ſorrow in their looks, going heavily along to the houſe of mourning, to perform that laſt melancholy

lancholy office, which, when the debt of nature is paid, we are called upon to pay to each other.

If the ſad occaſion which leads him there has not done it already, take notice to what a ſerious and devout frame of mind every man is reduced the moment he enters this gate of affliction. The buſy and fluttering ſpirits, which in the houſe of mirth were wont to tranſport him from one diverting object to another,—ſee how they are fallen! how peaceably they are laid! In this gloomy manſion, full of ſhades and uncomfortable damps to ſeize the ſoul,—ſee, the light and eaſy heart, which never knew what it was to think before, how penſive it is now! how ſoft! how ſuſceptible! how full of religious impreſſions! how deeply it is ſmitten with a ſenſe and with a love of virtue! Could we, in this criſis, whilſt this empire of reaſon and religion laſts, and the heart is thus exerciſed with wiſdom and buſied with Heavenly contemplations,—could we ſee it naked as it is,—ſtripped of its paſſions, unſpotted by the world, and regardleſs of its pleaſures,—we might then ſafely reſt our cauſe upon this ſingle evidence, and appeal to the moſt ſenſual, Whether Solomon has not made a juſt determination here in favour of the houſe of mourning?—not for its own ſake, but as it is fruitful in virtue, and becomes the occaſion of ſo much good. Without this end, ſorrow, I own, has no uſe but to ſhorten a man's days;—nor can gravity, with all its ſtudied

ſolemnity

ſolemnity of look and carriage, ſerve any end but to make one half of the world merry, and impoſe upon the other.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and may God of his mercy bleſs you! Amen.

SERMON III.

PHILANTHROPY RECOMMENDED.

LUKE x. 36, 37.

Which now of theſe three, thinkeſt thou, was neighbour unto him that fell amongſt the thieves?—And he ſaid, He that ſhewed mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him,—Go, and do thou likewiſe.

IN the foregoing verſes of this chapter, the Evangeliſt relates, that a certain lawyer ſtood up and tempted Jeſus, ſaying, Maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?—To which enquiry our Saviour, as his manner was, when any enſnaring queſtion was put to him, which he ſaw proceeded more from a deſign to entangle him, than an honeſt view of getting information,—inſtead of giving a direct anſwer, which might afford a handle to malice, or at beſt ſerve only to gratify an impertinent humour,—he immediately retorts the queſtion upon the man who aſked it, and unavoidably puts him upon the neceſſity of anſwering himſelf;—and, as in the preſent caſe, the particular profeſſion of the enquirer, and his ſuppoſed general knowledge of all other branches of learning, left no room to ſuſpect he could be ignorant of the true anſwer to this queſtion; and eſpecially, of what every one knew was delivered upon that head by their great Legiſlator; our Saviour

viour therefore refers him to his own memory of what he had found there in the courſe of his ſtudies:—What is written in the law, how readeſt thou?—Upon which the enquirer, reciting the general heads of our duty to God and Man, as delivered in the 18th of Leviticus and the 6th of Deuteronomy;—namely,—"That we ſhould worſhip the Lord our "God with all our hearts, and love our neigh-"bour as ourſelves;" our bleſſed Saviour tells him, he had anſwered right; and if he followed that leſſon, he could not fail of the bleſſing he ſeemed deſirous to inherit,—"This do, "and thou ſhalt live."

But he, as the context tells us, willing to juſtify himſelf,—willing poſſibly to gain more credit in the conference, or hoping, perhaps, to hear ſuch a partial and narrow definition of the word *neighbour* as would ſuit his own principles, and juſtify ſome particular oppreſſions of his own, or thoſe of which his whole order lay under an accuſation,—ſays unto Jeſus, in the 29th verſe,—"And who is my neigh-"bour?"—Though the demand at firſt ſight may ſeem utterly trifling, yet was it far from being ſo in fact. For, according as you underſtood the term in a more or leſs reſtrained ſenſe,—it produced many neceſſary variations in the duties you owed from that relation.—Our bleſſed Saviour, to rectify any partial and pernicious miſtake in this matter, and to place at once this duty of the love of our neighbour upon its true bottom of philanthropy and univerſal kindneſs, makes anſwer

to

to the propoſed queſtion, not by any far-fetched refinement from the ſchools of the Rabbies, which might have ſooner ſilenced than convinced the man,—but by a direct appeal to human nature, in an inſtance he relates of a man falling amongſt thieves, left in the greateſt diſtreſs imaginable, till by chance a Samaritan, an utter ſtranger, coming where he was, by an act of great goodneſs and compaſſion, not only relieved him at preſent, but took him under his protection, and generouſly provided for his future ſafety.

On the cloſe of which engaging account,—our Saviour appeals to the man's own heart, in the firſt verſe of the text,—"Which now "of theſe three, thinkeſt thou, was neigh-"bour unto him that fell amongſt the "thieves?"—and inſtead of drawing the inference himſelf, leaves him to decide in favour of ſo noble a principle ſo evidently founded in mercy.—The lawyer, ſtruck with the truth and juſtice of the doctrine, and frankly acknowledging the force of it, our bleſſed Saviour concludes the debate with a ſhort admonition, that he would practiſe what he had approved,—and go, and imitate that fair example of univerſal benevolence which it had ſet before him.

In the remaining part of the diſcourſe I ſhall follow the ſame plan; and, therefore, ſhall beg leave to enlarge firſt upon the ſtory itſelf, with ſuch reflections as will ariſe from it; and conclude, as our Saviour has done, with

with the ſame exhortation to kindneſs and humanity which ſo naturally falls from it.

A certain man, ſays our Saviour, went down from Jeruſalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who ſtripped him of his raiment, and departed, leaving him half-dead.—There is ſomething in our nature which engages us to take part in every accident to which man is ſubject, from what cauſe ſoever it may have happened;—but in ſuch calamities as a man has fallen into through mere misfortune, to be charged upon no fault or indiſcretion of himſelf, there is ſomething then ſo truly intereſting,—that, at firſt ſight, we generally make them our own, not altogether from a reflection that they might have been or may be ſo, but oftener from a certain generoſity and tenderneſs of nature which diſpoſes us for compaſſion, abſtracted from all conſiderations of ſelf: ſo that, without any obſervable act of the will, we ſuffer with the unfortunate, and feel a weight upon our ſpirits we know not why, on ſeeing the moſt common inſtances of their diſtreſs. But where the ſpectacle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated with many circumſtances of miſery, the mind is then taken captive at once, and, *were* it inclined to it, has no power to make reſiſtance; but ſurrenders itſelf to all the tender emotions of pity and deep concern. So that when one conſiders the friendly part of our nature without looking farther, one would think it impoſſible for a man to look upon miſery without

out finding himſelf in ſome meaſure attached to the intereſt of him who ſuffers it.—I ſay, one would think it impoſſible,—for there are ſome tempers—(how ſhall I deſcribe them?)—formed either of ſuch impenetrable matter, or wrought up by habitual ſelfiſhneſs to ſuch an utter inſenſibility of what becomes of the fortunes of their fellow-creatures, as if they were not partakers of the ſame nature, or had no lot or connection at all with the ſpecies.

Of this character, our Saviour produces two diſgraceful inſtances in the behaviour of a Prieſt and a Levite, whom in this account he repreſents as coming to the place where the unhappy man was;—both paſſing by without either ſtretching forth a hand to aſſiſt, or uttering a word to comfort him in his diſtreſs.

And by chance there came down a certain prieſt!—Merciful God! that a teacher of thy religion ſhould ever want humanity!—or that a man, whoſe head might be thought full of the one, ſhould have a heart void of the other?—This however was the caſe before us!—and though in theory one would ſcarce ſuſpect that the leaſt pretence to religion, and an open diſregard to ſo main a part of it, could ever meet together in one perſon,—yet, in fact, it is no fictitious character.

Look into the world.—How often do you behold a ſordid wretch, whoſe ſtrait heart is open to no man's affliction, taking ſhelter behind an appearance of piety, and putting on the garb of religion, which none but the mer-

ciful and compaſſionate have a title to wear! Take notice, with what ſanctity he goes to the end of his days, in the ſame ſelfiſh track in which he at firſt ſet out,—turning neither to the right hand nor to the left,—but plods on;—pores all his life-long upon the ground, as if afraid to look up, leſt, peradventure, he ſhould ſee aught which might turn him one moment out of that ſtraight line where intereſt is carrying him;—or if, by chance, he ſtumbles upon a hapleſs object of diſtreſs, which threatens ſuch a diſaſter to him,—like the man here repreſented, *devoutly* paſſing by on the other ſide, as if unwilling to truſt himſelf to the impreſſions of nature, or hazard the inconveniences which pity might lead him into upon the occaſion.

There is but one ſtroke wanting in this picture of an unmerciful man, to render the character utterly odious; and that our Saviour gives in the following inſtance he relates upon it. And likewiſe, ſays he, "a Levite, when "he was at the place, came and looked at "him." It was not a tranſient overſight, the haſty or ill-adviſed neglect of an unconſidering humour, with which the beſt diſpoſed are ſometimes overtaken, and led on beyond the point where otherwiſe they would have wiſhed to ſtop.—No!—on the contrary, it had all the aggravation of a deliberate act of inſenſibility proceeding from a hard heart. When he was at the place, he came and looked at him,—conſidered his misfortunes, gave time for reaſon and nature to have awoke,—ſaw the imminent

minent danger he was in,—and the preſſing neceſſity of immediate help, which ſo violent a caſe called aloud for; and after all,—turned aſide, and unmercifully left him to all the diſtreſſes of his condition.

In all unmerciful actions, the worſt of men pay this compliment at leaſt to humanity, as to endeavour to wear as much of the appearance of it as the caſe will well let them;—ſo that, in the hardeſt acts a man ſhall be guilty of, he has ſome motives, true or falſe, always ready to offer, either to ſatisfy himſelf or the world,—and, God knows, too often to impoſe both upon the one and the other. And therefore it would be no hard matter here to give a probable gueſs at what paſſed in the Levite's mind in the preſent caſe, and ſhew, was it neceſſary, by what kind of caſuiſtry he ſettled the matter with his conſcience as he paſſed by, and guarded all the paſſages to his heart againſt the inroads which pity might attempt to make upon the occaſion.—But it is painful to dwell long upon this diſagreeable part of the ſtory; I therefore haſten to the concluding incident of it, which is ſo amiable, that one cannot eaſily be too copious in reflections upon it.—And behold, ſays our Saviour, a certain Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he ſaw him, he had compaſſion on him,—and went to him,—bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine,—ſet him upon his own beaſt, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.—I ſuppoſe, it will be ſcarce neceſſary here to remind you,

that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans;—an old religious grudge,—the worſt of all grudges,—had wrought ſuch a diſlike between both people, that they held themſelves mutually diſcharged not only from all offices of friendſhip and kindneſs, but even from the moſt common acts of courteſy and good manners. This operated ſo ſtrongly in our Saviour's time, that the woman of Samaria ſeemed aſtoniſhed that he, being a Jew, ſhould aſk water of her, who was a Samaritan;—ſo that with ſuch a prepoſſeſſion, however diſtreſsful the caſe of the unfortunate man was, and how reaſonably ſoever he might plead for pity from another man, there was little aid or conſolation to be looked for from ſo unpromiſing a quarter. 'Alas! after I have been 'twice paſſed by, neglected by men of my own 'nation and religion, bound by ſo many ties 'to aſſiſt me, left here friendleſs and unpitied 'both by a Prieſt and a Levite, men whoſe 'profeſſion and ſuperior advantages of know-'ledge could not leave them in the dark in 'what manner they ſhould diſcharge this debt 'which my condition claims,—after this,— 'what hopes? what expectations from a paſ-'ſenger, not only a ſtranger,—but a Samari-'tan, releaſed from all obligations to me, and 'by a national diſlike, inflamed by mutual ill 'offices, now made my enemy, and more 'likely to rejoice at the evils which have fallen 'upon me, than to ſtretch forth a hand to ſave 'me from them!'

'Tis

'Tis no unnatural ſoliloquy to imagine; but the actions of generous and compaſſionate tempers baffle all little reaſonings about them. —True charity, in the Apoſtle's deſcription, as it is kind, and is not eaſily provoked, ſo it manifeſted this character here; for we find, when he came where he was, and beheld his diſtreſs,—all the unfriendly paſſions, which at another time might have roſe within him, now utterly forſook him and fled: when he ſaw his misfortunes,—he forgot his enmity towards the man,—dropped all the prejudices which education had planted againſt him; and in the room of them, all that was good and compaſſionate was ſuffered to ſpeak in his behalf.

In benevolent natures the impulſe to pity is ſo ſudden, that like inſtruments of muſic which obey the touch,—the objects which are fitted to excite ſuch impreſſions work ſo inſtantaneous an effect, that you would think the will was ſcarce concerned, and that the mind was altogether paſſive in the ſympathy which her own goodneſs has excited. The truth is,—the Soul is generally in ſuch caſes ſo buſily taken up, and wholly engroſſed by the object of pity, that ſhe does not attend to her own operations, or take leiſure to examine the principles upon which ſhe acts. So that the Samaritan, though the moment he ſaw him he had compaſſion on him, yet, ſudden as the emotion is repreſented, you are not to imagine that it was mechanical, but that there was a ſettled principle of humanity and goodneſs

which operated within him, and influenced not only the firſt impulſe of kindneſs, but the continuation of it throughout the reſt of ſo engaging a behaviour. And becauſe it is a pleaſure to look into a good mind, and trace out, as far as one is able, what paſſes within it on ſuch occaſions, I ſhall beg leave for a moment to ſtate an account of what was likely to paſs in his, and in what manner ſo diſtreſsful a caſe would neceſſarily work upon ſuch a diſpoſition.

As he approached the place where the unfortunate man lay, the inſtant he beheld him, no doubt ſome ſuch train of reflections as theſe would riſe in his mind:—"Good God! "what a ſpectacle of miſery do I behold!—a "man ſtripped of his raiment,—wounded,— "lying languiſhing before me upon the ground, "juſt ready to expire,—without the comfort "of a friend to ſupport him in his laſt ago- "nies, or the proſpect of a hand to cloſe his "eyes when his pains are over! But perhaps "my concern ſhould leſſen when I reflect on "the relations in which we ſtand to each other, "—that he is a Jew, and I a Samaritan.—— "But are we not ſtill both men? partakers of "the ſame nature,—and ſubject to the ſame "evils?—Let me change conditions with him "for a moment, and conſider, had his lot be- "fallen me as I journeyed in the way, what "meaſure I ſhould have expected at his hand. "—Should I wiſh, when he beheld me wound- "ed and half-dead, that he ſhould ſhut up his "bowels of compaſſion from me, and double "the weight of my miſeries by paſſing by

"and

" and leaving them unpitied?—But I am a
" ſtranger to the man;—be it ſo;—but I am
" no ſtranger to his condition;—misfortunes
" are of no particular tribe or nation, but
" belong to us all,—and have a general claim
" upon us, without diſtinction of climate,
" country, or religion. Beſides, though I am
" a ſtranger,—'tis no fault of his that I do
" not know him, and therefore unequitable
" he ſhould ſuffer by it:—Had I known him,
" poſſibly I ſhould have had cauſe to love and
" pity him the more;—for aught I know, he
" is ſome one of uncommon merit, whoſe life
" is rendered ſtill more precious, as the lives
" and happineſs of others may be involved in
" it: perhaps at this inſtant that he lies here
" forſaken in all this miſery, a whole virtuous
" family is joyfully looking for his return, and
" affectionately counting the hours of his de-
" lay! Oh! did they know what evil had be-
" fallen him,—how would they fly to ſuccour
" him!—Let me then haſten to ſupply thoſe
" tender offices of binding up his wounds, and
" carrying him to a place of ſafety;—or, if
" that aſſiſtance comes too late, I ſhall com-
" fort him at leaſt in his laſt hour;—and, if I
" can do nothing elſe,—I ſhall ſoften his miſ-
" fortunes by dropping a tear of pity over
" them."

'Tis almoſt neceſſary to imagine the good Samaritan was influenced by ſome ſuch thoughts as theſe, from the uncommon generoſity of his behaviour, which is repreſented by our Saviour operating like the warm zeal of a brother,

mixed with the affectionate diſcretion and care of a parent, who was not ſatisfied with taking him under his protection, and ſupplying his preſent wants, but in looking forwards for him, and taking care that his wants ſhould be ſupplied when he ſhould be gone, and no longer near to befriend him.

I think there needs no ſtronger argument to prove how univerſally and deeply the ſeeds of this virtue of compaſſion are planted in the heart of man, than in the pleaſure we take in ſuch repreſentations of it: and though ſome men have repreſented human nature in other colours (though to what end I know not), yet the matter of fact is ſo ſtrong againſt him, that from the general propenſity to pity the unfortunate, we expreſs that ſenſation by the word Humanity, as if it was inſeparable from our nature. That it is not inſeparable, I have allowed in the former part of this diſcourſe, from ſome reproachful inſtances of ſelfiſh tempers, which ſeem to take part in nothing beyond themſelves; yet I am perſuaded, and affirm 'tis ſtill ſo great and noble a part of our nature, that a man muſt do great violence to himſelf, and ſuffer many a painful conflict, before he has brought himſelf to a different diſpoſition.

'Tis obſervable in the foregoing account, that when the Prieſt came to the place where he was, he paſſed by on the other ſide;—he might have paſſed by, you'll ſay, without turning aſide.—No; there is a ſecret ſhame which attends every act of inhumanity, not to be conquered

conquered in the hardeſt natures, ſo that as in other caſes, ſo eſpecially in this, many a man will do a cruel act, who at the ſame time will bluſh to look you in the face, and is forced to turn aſide before he can have a heart to execute his purpoſe.

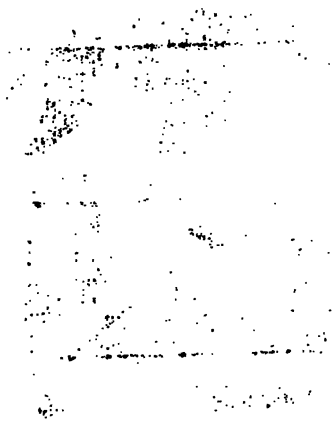
Inconſiſtent creature that man is! who at that inſtant that he does what is wrong, is not able to withhold his teſtimony to what is good and praiſeworthy!

I have now done with the parable, which was the firſt part propoſed to be conſidered in this diſcourſe; and ſhould proceed to the ſecond, which ſo naturally falls from it, of exhorting you, as our Saviour did the lawyer upon it, to go and do ſo likewiſe; but I have been ſo copious in my reflections upon the ſtory itſelf, that I find I have inſenſibly incorporated into them almoſt all that I ſhould have ſaid here in recommending ſo amiable an example; by which means I have unawares anticipated the taſk I propoſed. I ſhall therefore detain you no longer than with a ſingle remark upon the ſubject in general, which is this:—'Tis obſervable in many places of ſcripture, that our bleſſed Saviour, in deſcribing the day of judgment, does it in ſuch a manner, as if the great enquiry then, was to relate principally to this one virtue of compaſſion,—and as if our final ſentence at that ſolemnity was to be pronounced exactly according to the degrees of it. "I was a hun-"gered, and ye gave me meat;—thirſty, and "ye gave me drink;—naked, and ye clothed "me;

" me;—I was ſick, and ye viſited me;—in " priſon, and ye came unto me." Not that we are to imagine from thence, as if any other good or evil action ſhould then be overlooked by the eye of the All-ſeeing Judge, but barely to intimate to us, that a charitable and benevolent diſpoſition is ſo principal and ruling a part of a man's character, as to be a conſiderable teſt by itſelf of the whole frame and temper of his mind, with which all other virtues and vices reſpectively riſe and fall, and will almoſt neceſſarily be connected.—Tell me therefore of a compaſſionate man, you repreſent to me a man of a thouſand other good qualities;—on whom I can depend,—whom I may ſafely truſt with my wife,—my children,—my fortune and reputation.—'Tis for this, as the Apoſtle argues from the ſame principle,—" that he will not commit adul- " tery,—that he will not kill,—that he will " not ſteal,—that he will not bear falſe wit- " neſs." That is, the ſorrows which are ſtirred up in mens hearts by ſuch treſpaſſes, are ſo tenderly felt by a compaſſionate man, that it is not in his power or his nature to commit them.

So that well might he conclude, that Charity, by which he means love to your neighbour, was the end of the commandment; and that whoſoever fulfilled it, had fulfilled the law.

Now to God, &c. Amen.



SERMON III.

SERMON IV.

SELF KNOWLEDGE.

2 Samuel, xii. 7.

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the **man**: and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that **hath** done this thing, shall surely die, &c.

SERMON IV.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

2 SAM. XII. 7.

And Nathan ſaid unto David, Thou art the man.

THERE is no hiſtorical paſſage in ſcripture which gives a more remarkable inſtance of the deceitfulneſs of the heart of man to itſelf, and of how little we truly know of ourſelves, than this, wherein David is convicted out of his own mouth, and is led by the prophet to condemn and pronounce a ſevere judgment upon another, for an act of injuſtice, which he had paſſed over in himſelf, and poſſibly reconciled to his own conſcience. To know one's ſelf, one would think could be no very difficult leſſon;—for who, you'll ſay, can well be truly ignorant of himſelf, and the true diſpoſition of his own heart? If a man thinks at all, he cannot be a ſtranger to what paſſes there;—he muſt be conſcious of his own thoughts and deſires, he muſt remember his paſt purſuits, and the true ſprings and motives which in general have directed the actions of his life: he may hang out falſe colours and deceive the world; but how can a man deceive himſelf? That a man can, is evident, becauſe he daily does ſo.—Scripture tells us, and gives us many hiſtorical proofs of it, beſides this to

which

which the text refers:—"That the heart of "man is treacherous to itſelf, and deceitful "above all things;" and experience and every hour's commerce with the world confirms the truth of this ſeeming paradox, "That though "man is the only creature endowed with re-"flection, and conſequently qualified to know "the moſt of himſelf;—yet, ſo it happens, "that he generally knows the leaſt;—and "with all the power which God has given "him of turning his eyes inward upon him-"ſelf, and taking notice of the chain of his "own thoughts and deſires,—yet, in fact, is "generally ſo inattentive, but always ſo par-"tial an obſerver of what paſſes, that he is as "much, nay often a much greater ſtranger to "his own diſpoſition and true character, than "all the world beſides!"

By what means he is brought under ſo manifeſt a deluſion, and how he ſuffers himſelf to be ſo groſsly impoſed upon in a point which he is capable of knowing ſo much better than others, is not hard to give an account of, nor need we ſeek farther for it than amongſt the cauſes which are every day perverting his reaſon and miſleading him. We are deceived in judging of ourſelves, juſt as we are in judging of other things, when our paſſions and inclinations are called in as counſellors, and we ſuffer ourſelves to ſee and reaſon juſt ſo far and no farther than they give us leave. How hard do we find it to paſs an equitable and ſound judgment in a matter where our intereſt is deeply concerned!—and even

even where there is the remoteſt conſideration of SELF connected with the point before us, what a ſtrange bias does it hang upon our minds, and how difficult it is to diſengage our judgments entirely from it! With what reluctance are we brought to think evil of a friend whom we have long loved and eſteemed! and though there happens to be ſtrong appearances againſt him, how apt are we to overlook or put favourable conſtructions upon them, and even ſometimes, when our zeal and friendſhip tranſport us, to aſſign the beſt and kindeſt motives for the worſt and moſt unjuſtifiable parts of his conduct!

We are ſtill worſe caſuiſts; and the deceit is proportionably ſtronger with a man, when he is going to judge of himſelf,—that deareſt of all parties,—ſo cloſely connected with him,—ſo much and ſo long beloved,—of whom he has ſo early conceived the higheſt opinion and eſteem, and with whoſe merit he has all along, no doubt, found ſo much reaſon to be contented. It is not an eaſy matter to be ſevere, where there is ſuch an impulſe to be kind,—or to efface at once all the tender impreſſions in favour of ſo old a friend, which diſabled us from thinking of him as he is, and ſeeing him in the light, may be, in which every one elſe ſees him.

So that, however eaſy this knowledge of one's ſelf may appear at firſt ſight, it is otherwiſe when we come to examine; ſince not only in practice, but even in ſpeculation and theory, we find it one of the hardeſt and moſt painful

painful leſſons. Some of the earlieſt inſtructors of mankind, no doubt, found it ſo too; and for that reaſon ſoon ſaw the neceſſity of laying ſuch a ſtreſs upon this great precept of ſelf-knowledge, which, for its excellent wiſdom and uſefulneſs, many of them ſuppoſed to be a divine direction; that it came down from Heaven, and comprehended the whole circle both of the knowledge and the duty of man. And indeed their zeal might eaſily be allowed in ſo high an encomium upon the attainment of a virtue, the want of which ſo often baffled their inſtructions, and rendered their endeavours of reforming the heart vain and uſeleſs. For who could think of a reformation of the faults without him, who knew not where they lay, or could ſet about correcting, till he had firſt come to a ſenſe of the defects which required it?

But this was a point always much eaſier recommended by public inſtructors than ſhewn how to be put in practice: and therefore others, who equally ſought the reformation of mankind, obſerving that this direct road which led to it was guarded on all ſides by ſelf-love, and conſequently very difficult to open acceſs, ſoon found out that a different and more artful courſe was requiſite; as they had not ſtrength to remove this flattering paſſion which ſtood in their way and blocked up all the paſſages to the heart, they endeavoured by ſtratagem to get beyond it, and by a ſkilful addreſs, if poſſible, to deceive it. This gave riſe to the early manner of conveying their inſtructions

in parables, fables, and ſuch ſort of indirect applications; which, though they could not conquer this principle of ſelf-love, yet often laid it aſleep, or at leaſt over-reached it for a few moments, till a juſt judgment could be procured.

The prophet Nathan ſeems to have been a great maſter in this way of addreſs. David had greatly diſpleaſed God by two grievous ſins which he had committed; and the prophet's commiſſion was to go and bring him to a conviction of them, and touch his heart with a ſenſe of guilt for what he had done againſt the honour and life of Uriah.

The holy man knew, that was it any one's caſe but David's own, no man would have been ſo quick-ſighted in diſcerning the nature of the injury,—more ready to have redreſſed it,—or who would have felt more compaſſion for the party who had ſuffered it, than he himſelf.

Inſtead therefore of declaring the real intention of his errand, by a direct accuſation and reproof for the crimes he had committed, he comes to him with fictitious complaint of a cruel act of injuſtice done by another, and accordingly he frames a caſe, not ſo parallel to to David's as he ſuppoſed would awaken his ſuſpicion, and prevent a patient and candid hearing; and yet not ſo void of reſemblance in the main circumſtances, as to fail of ſtriking him when ſhewn in a proper light.

And Nathan came and ſaid unto him, "There were two men in one city, the one

"rich

" rich and the other poor;—the rich man
" had exceeding many flocks and herds; but
" the poor man had nothing ſave one little
" ewe-lamb which he had bought and nou-
" riſhed up;—and it grew up together with
" him and with his children;—it did eat of
" his own meat and drink of his own cup,
" and lay in his boſom, and was unto him as
" a daughter:—and there came a traveller
" unto the rich man, and he ſpared to take
" of his own flock and of his own herd to
" dreſs for the wayfaring man that was come
" unto him, but took the poor man's lamb
" and dreſſed it for the man that was come
" unto him."

The caſe was drawn up with great judgment and beauty;—the ſeveral minute circumſtances which heightened the injury, truly affecting,—and ſo ſtrongly urged, that it would have been impoſſible for any man with a previous ſenſe of guilt upon his mind, to have defended himſelf from ſome degree of remorſe, which it muſt naturally have excited.

The ſtory, though it ſpoke only of the injuſtice and oppreſſive act of another man,—yet it pointed to what he had lately done himſelf, with all the circumſtances of its aggravation;—and withal, the whole was ſo tenderly addreſſed to the heart and paſſions, as to kindle at once the utmoſt horror and indignation. And ſo it did;—but not againſt the proper perſon. In his tranſport he forgot himſelf;—his anger greatly kindled againſt the man;—and he ſaid unto Nathan, " As the Lord
" liveth,

" liveth, the man that hath done this thing " ſhall ſurely die, and he ſhall reſtore the " lamb fourfold, becauſe he did this thing, " and becauſe he had no pity."

It can ſcarce be doubted here, but that David's anger was real, and that he was, what he appeared to be, greatly provoked and exaſperated againſt the offender; and, indeed, his ſentence againſt him proves he was ſo, above meaſure. For to puniſh the man with death, and oblige him to reſtore fourfold beſides, was highly unequitable, and not only diſproportioned to the offence, but far above the utmoſt rigour and ſeverity of the law, which allowed a much ſofter atonement; requiring, in ſuch a caſe, no more than an ample reſtitution and recompenſe in kind. The judgment, however, ſeems to have been truly ſincere and well-meant, and beſpoke rather the honeſt raſhneſs of an unſuſpicious judge, than the cool determination of a conſcious and guilty man, who knew he was going to paſs ſentence upon himſelf.

I take notice of this particular, becauſe it places this inſtance of ſelf-deceit, which is the ſubject of the diſcourſe, in the ſtrongeſt light, and fully demonſtrates the truth of a fact in this great man, which happens every day among ourſelves, namely, that a man may be guilty of very bad and diſhoneſt actions, and yet reflect ſo little, or ſo partially, upon what he has done, as to keep his conſcience free, not only from guilt, but even

the remoteſt ſuſpicions, that he is the man which in truth he is, and what the tenor and evidence of his life demonſtrate. If we look into the world, — David's is no uncommon caſe; — we ſee ſome one or other perpetually copying this bad original, ſitting in judgment upon himſelf, — hearing his own cauſe, and not knowing what he is doing; haſty in paſſing ſentence, and even executing it too with wrath upon the perſon of another, when, in the language of the prophet, one might ſay to him with juſtice, — "Thou art the man."

Of the many revengeful, covetous, falſe, and ill-natured perſons which we complain of in the world, though we all join in the cry againſt them, what man amongſt us ſingles out himſelf as a criminal, or ever once takes it into his head that he adds to the number? — or where is there a man ſo bad, who would not think it the hardeſt and moſt unfair imputation, to have any of thoſe particular vices laid to his charge?

If he has the ſymptoms ever ſo ſtrong upon him, which he would pronounce infallible in another, they are indications of no ſuch malady in himſelf. — He ſees, what no one elſe ſees, ſome ſecret and flattering circumſtances in his favour, which no doubt make a wide difference betwixt his caſe and the party's which he condemns.

What other man ſpeaks ſo often and vehemently againſt the vice of pride, ſets the weakneſs of it in a more odious light, or is more hurt with it in another, than the proud

man

man himſelf? It is the ſame with the paſſionate, the deſigning, the ambitious, and ſome other common characters in life; and being a conſequence of the nature of ſuch vices, and almoſt inſeparable from them, the effects of it are generally ſo groſs and abſurd, that where pity does not forbid, it is pleaſant to obſerve and trace the cheat through the ſeveral turnings and windings of the heart, and detect it through all the ſhapes and appearances which it puts on.

Next to theſe inſtances of ſelf-deceit and utter ignorance of our true diſpoſition and character, which appear in not ſeeing *that* in ourſelves which ſhocks us in another man, there is another ſpecies ſtill more dangerous and deluſive, and which the more guarded perpetually fall into from the judgments they make of different vices, according to their age and complexion, and the various ebbs and flows of their paſſions and deſires.

To conceive this, let any man look into his own heart, and obſerve in how different a degree of deteſtation, numbers of actions ſtand there, though equally bad and vicious in themſelves: He will ſoon find that ſuch of them as ſtrong inclination or cuſtom has prompted him to commit, are generally dreſſed out, and painted with all the falſe beauties which a ſoft and flattering hand can give them; and that the others, to which he feels no propenſity, appear at once naked and deformed, ſurrounded with all the true circumſtances of their folly and diſhonour.

When David ſurpriſed Saul ſleeping in the cave, and cut off the ſkirt of his robe, we read, his heart ſmote him for what he had done: —ſtrange, it ſmote him not in this matter of Uriah, where it had ſo much ſtronger reaſon to take the alarm! —A whole year had almoſt paſſed from the firſt commiſſion of this injuſtice, to the time the prophet was ſent to reprove him; and we read not once of any remorſe or compunction of heart for what he had done: and it is not to be doubted, had the ſame prophet met him when he was returning up out of the cave,—and told him, that, ſcrupulous and conſcientious as he then ſeemed and thought himſelf to be, he was deceiving himſelf, and was capable of committing the fouleſt and moſt diſhonourable actions;—that he ſhould one day murder a faithful and a valiant ſervant, whom he ought in juſtice to have loved and honoured;—that he ſhould without pity firſt wound him in the tendereſt part, by taking away his deareſt poſſeſſion,—and then unmercifully and treacherouſly rob him of his life:—had Nathan in a prophetic ſpirit foretold to David that he was capable of this, and that he ſhould one day actually do it, and from no other motive but the momentary gratification of a baſe and unworthy paſſion, he would have received the prediction with horror, and ſaid poſſibly with Hazael upon juſt ſuch another occaſion, and with the ſame ignorance of himſelf,—"What! "is thy ſervant a dog that he ſhould do this

"great

" great thing?" And yet in all likelihood, at that very time there wanted nothing but the ſame degree of temptation, and the ſame opportunity to induce him to the ſin which afterwards overcame him.

Thus the caſe ſtands with us ſtill. When the paſſions are warmed, and the ſin which preſents itſelf exactly tallies to the deſire, obſerve how impetuouſly a man will ruſh into it, and act againſt all principles of honour, juſtice, and mercy! — Talk to him the moment after upon the nature of another vice to which he is not addicted, and from which perhaps his age, his temper, or rank in life ſecure him; take notice, how well he reaſons,—with what equity he determines,— what an honeſt indignation and ſharpneſs he expreſſes againſt it, and how inſenſibly his anger kindles againſt the man who hath done this thing!

Thus we are nice in grains and ſcruples, — but knaves in matters of a pound weight; every day ſtraining at gnats, yet ſwallowing camels; —miſerably cheating ourſelves, and torturing our reaſon to bring us in ſuch a report of the ſin as ſuits the preſent appetite and inclination.

Moſt of us are aware of and pretend to deteſt the barefaced inſtances of that hypocriſy by which men deceive others; but few of us are upon our guard, or ſee that more fatal hypocriſy by which we deceive and over-reach our own hearts! It is a flattering and dangerous diſtemper, which has undone

done thouſands;—we bring the ſeeds of it along with us into the world,—they inſenſibly grow up with us from our childhood,—they lie long concealed and undiſturbed, and have generally got ſuch deep root in our natures by the time we are come to years of underſtanding and reflection, that it requires all we have got to defend ourſelves from their effects.

To make the caſe ſtill worſe on our ſides, 'tis with this as with every grievous diſtemper of the body,—the remedies are dangerous and doubtful, in proportion to our miſtakes and ignorance of the cauſe: for in the inſtances of ſelf-deceit, though the head is ſick, and the whole heart faint, the patient ſeldom knows what he ails. Of all the things we know and learn, this neceſſary knowledge comes to us the laſt.

Upon what principle it happens thus, I have endeavoured to lay open in the firſt part of this diſcourſe; which I conclude with a ſerious exhortation to ſtruggle againſt them; which we can only hope to do, by converſing more and oftener with ourſelves, than the buſineſs and diverſions of the world generally give us leave.

We have a chain of thoughts, deſires, engagements, and idleneſſes, which perpetually return upon us in their proper time and order;—let us, I beſeech you, aſſign and ſet apart ſome ſmall portion of the day for this purpoſe;—of retiring into ourſelves, and ſearching into the dark corners and receſſes of the

and taking notice of what is paſſing there. If a man can bring himſelf to do this taſk with a curious and impartial eye, he will quickly find the fruits of it will more than recompenſe his time and labour. He will ſee ſeveral irregularities and unſuſpected paſſions within him which he never was aware of:—he will diſcover in his progreſs many ſecret turnings and windings in his heart to which he was a ſtranger, which now gradually open and diſcloſe themſelves to him upon a nearer view. In theſe labyrinths he will trace out ſuch hidden ſprings and motives for many of his moſt applauded actions, as will make him rather ſorry and aſhamed of himſelf, than proud.

In a word, he will underſtand his errors, and then ſee the neceſſity, with David, of imploring God to cleanſe him from his ſecret faults,—and with ſome hope and confidence to ſay, with this great man after his conviction,—"Try me, O God, and ſeek the ground of "my heart;—prove me, and examine my "thoughts; look well if there be any way of "wickedneſs in me,—and lead me in the "way everlaſting."

Now to God the Father, &c. &c.

SERMON V.

THE CASE OF ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH CONSIDERED.

A CHARITY SERMON.

TO

THE VERY REVEREND

RICHARD OSBALDISTON, D.D.

DEAN OF YORK.

SIR,

I HAVE taken the liberty to inſcribe this Diſcourſe to you, in teſtimony of the great reſpect which I owe to your character in general; and from a ſenſe of what is due to it in particular, from every member of the *Church of York*.

I wiſh I had as good a reaſon for doing that, which has given me the opportunity of making ſo public and juſt an acknowledgement; being afraid there can be little left to be ſaid upon the ſubject of *Charity*, which has not been often thought, and much better expreſſed by many who have gone before: and, indeed, it ſeems ſo beaten and common a path, that it is not an eaſy matter for a new-comer to diſtinguiſh himſelf in it, by any thing except the novelty of his *vehicle*.

I beg, however, Sir, your kind acceptance of it, and of the motives which have induced me to addreſs it to you; one of which I cannot conceal in juſtice to myſelf, becauſe it has proceeded from the ſenſe of many favours and civilities which I have received from you. I am,

Reverend Sir,

your moſt obliged,
and faithful humble Servant,

LAURENCE STERNE.

SERMON V.

THE CASE OF ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH CONSIDERED.

I KINGS XVII. 16.

And the barrel of meal waſted not, neither did the cruſe of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he ſpake by the prophet Elijah.

THE words of the text are the record of a miracle wrought in behalf of the widow of Zarephath, who had charitably taken Elijah under her roof, and adminiſtered unto him in a time of great ſcarcity and diſtreſs. There is ſomething very intereſting and affectionate in the manner this ſtory is related in holy writ; and, as it concludes with a ſecond ſtill more remarkable proof of God's favour to the ſame perſon, in the reſtoration of her dead ſon to life, one cannot but conſider both miracles as rewards of that act of piety, wrought by Infinite Power, and left upon record in ſcripture, not merely as teſtimonies of the prophet's divine miſſion, but likewiſe as two encouraging inſtances of God Almighty's bleſſing upon works of charity and benevolence.

In this view I have made choice of this piece of ſacred hiſtory, which I ſhall beg leave to make uſe of as the ground-work for an exhortation to charity in general: and, that it may better anſwer the particular purpoſe of

No doubt, ſhe had long fenced againſt this tragical event with all the thrifty management which ſelf-preſervation and parental love could inſpire; full, no doubt, of cares and many tender apprehenſions, leſt the ſlender ſtock ſhould fail them before the return of plenty.

But as ſhe was a widow, having loſt the only faithful friend who would beſt have aſſiſted her in this virtuous ſtruggle, the preſent neceſſity of the times at length overcame her, and ſhe was juſt falling down an eaſy prey to it, when Elijah came to the place where ſhe was.— "And he called unto her, and ſaid, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a veſſel, that I may drink. And, as ſhe was going to fetch it, he called unto her, and ſaid, Bring me I pray thee, a morſel of bread in thine hand. And ſhe ſaid, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruſe: and behold, I am gathering two ſticks, that I may go in and dreſs it for me and my ſon, that we may eat and die. And Elijah ſaid unto her, Fear not, but go, and do as thou haſt ſaid; but make me thereof a little cake firſt, and bring it unto me; and after make for thee and for thy ſon, For thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael, The barrel of meal ſhall not waſte, neither ſhall the cruſe of oil fail, until the day that the Lord ſendeth rain upon the earth."

True charity is always unwilling to find excuſes,—elſe here was a fair opportunity

of

of this ſolemnity, I will endeavour to enlarge upon it with ſuch reflections as, I truſt in God, will excite ſome ſentiments of compaſſion, which may be profitable to ſo pious a deſign.

Elijah had fled from two dreadful evils; the approach of a famine, and the perſecution of Ahab—an enraged enemy: and, in obedience to the command of God, had hid himſelf in the brook Cherith that is before Jordan. In this ſafe and peaceful ſolitude, bleſſed with daily marks of God's providence, the holy man dwelt, free both from the cares and glories of the world: by miraculous impulſe, "the ravens brought him bread and fleſh in the morning, and bread and fleſh in the evening; and he drank of the brook;" till by continuance of drought (the windows of Heaven being ſhut up in thoſe days for three years and ſix months, which was the natural cauſe likewiſe of the famine) it came to paſs, after a while, that the brook, the great fountain of his ſupport, dried up; and he is again directed, by the word of the Lord, where to betake himſelf for ſhelter. He is commanded to ariſe and go to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, with an aſſurance that he had diſpoſed the heart of a widow-woman there to ſuſtain him.

The prophet follows the call of his God; the ſame hand which brought him to the gate of the city, had led alſo the poor widow out of her doors, oppreſſed with ſorrow. She had come forth upon a melancholy errand, to make preparation to eat her laſt meal, and ſhare it with her child.

No

No doubt, ſhe had long fenced againſt this tragical event with all the thrifty management which ſelf-preſervation and parental love could inſpire; full, no doubt, of cares and many tender apprehenſions, leſt the ſlender ſtock ſhould fail them before the return of plenty.

But as ſhe was a widow, having loſt the only faithful friend who would beſt have aſſiſted her in this virtuous ſtruggle, the preſent neceſſity of the times at length overcame her, and ſhe was juſt falling down an eaſy prey to it, when Elijah came to the place where ſhe was.—"And he called unto her, and ſaid, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a veſſel, that I may drink. And, as ſhe was going to fetch it, he called unto her, and ſaid, Bring me I pray thee, a morſel of bread in thine hand. And ſhe ſaid, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruſe: and behold, I am gathering two ſticks, that I may go in and dreſs it for me and my ſon, that we may eat and die. And Elijah ſaid unto her, Fear not, but go, and do as thou haſt ſaid; but make me thereof a little cake firſt, and bring it unto me; and after make for thee and for thy ſon, For thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael, The barrel of meal ſhall not waſte, neither ſhall the cruſe of oil fail, until the day that the Lord ſendeth rain upon the earth."

True charity is always unwilling to find excuſes,—elſe here was a fair opportunity of

of pleading many: ſhe might have inſiſted over again upon her ſituation, which neceſſarily tied up her hands;—ſhe might have urged the unreaſonableneſs of the requeſt;—that ſhe was reduced to the loweſt extremity already, and that it was contrary to juſtice and the firſt law of nature, to rob herſelf and child of their laſt morſel, and give it to a ſtranger.

But, in generous ſpirits, compaſſion is ſometimes more than a balance for ſelf-preſervation; for, as God certainly interwove that friendly ſoftneſs in our nature to be a check upon too great a propenſity towards ſelf-love,—ſo it ſeemed to operate here.—For it is obſervable, that, though the prophet backed his requeſt with the promiſe of an immediate recompenſe in multiplying her ſtock,—yet it is not evident ſhe was influenced at all by that temptation; for, if ſhe had, doubtleſs it muſt have wrought ſuch a mixture of ſelf-intereſt into the motive of her compliance, as muſt greatly have allayed the merit of the action. But this, I ſay, does not appear, but rather the contrary, from the reflection ſhe makes upon the whole, in the laſt verſe of the chapter: "Now, by "this I know that thou art a man of God, "and that the word of the Lord in thy "mouth is truth."

Beſides, as ſhe was an inhabitant of Zarephath (or, as it is called by St. Luke, Sarepta, ſubject to Zidon, the metropolis of Phœnicia, without the bounds of God's people) ſhe had been brought up in groſs darkneſs and idolatry,

try, in utter ignorance of the Lord God of Iſrael: or, if ſhe had heard of his name, which is all that ſeems probable, ſhe had been taught to diſbelieve the mighty wonders of his hand, and was ſtill leſs likely to believe his prophet.

Moreover, ſhe might argue, If this man, by ſome ſecret myſtery of his own, or through the power of his God, is able to procure ſo preternatural a ſupply for me, whence comes it to paſs that he now ſtands in want himſelf, oppreſſed both with hunger and thirſt?

It appears, therefore, that ſhe muſt have been wrought upon by an unmixed principle of humanity.—She looked upon him as a fellow-partner, almoſt in the ſame affliction with herſelf;—ſhe conſidered he had come a weary pilgrimage, in a ſultry climate, through an exhauſted country, where neither bread nor water were to be had but by acts of liberality;—that he had come too an unknown traveller; and, as a hard heart never wants a pretence, that this circumſtance, which ſhould rather have befriended, might have helped to oppreſs him.—She conſidered, for charity is ever fruitful in kind reaſons, that he was now far from his own country, and had ſtrayed out of the reach of the tender offices of ſome one who affectionately mourned his abſence; — her heart was touched with pity;—ſhe turned in ſilence, and "went and did according as he had "ſaid. And behold, both ſhe, and he, and "her houſe, did eat many days;" or, as in

the margin, one whole year. "And the "barrel of meal waſted not, neither did the "cruſe of oil fail, until the day that God ſent "rain upon the earth."

Though it may not ſeem neceſſary to raiſe conjectures here upon this event, yet it is natural to ſuppoſe, the danger of the famine being thus unexpectedly got over, that the mother began to look hopefully forwards upon the reſt of her days. There were many widows in Iſrael at that time, When the Heavens were ſhut up for three years and ſix months, yet, as St. Luke obſerves, "to none "of them was the prophet ſent, ſave to the "widow of Sarepta." In all likelihood, ſhe would not be the laſt in making the ſame obſervation, and drawing from it ſome flattering concluſion in favour of her ſon. — Many a parent would build high upon a worſe foundation.— 'Since the God of Iſrael has 'thus ſent his own meſſenger to us in our 'diſtreſs, to paſs by ſo many houſes of his 'own people, and ſtop at mine, to ſave it in 'ſo miraculous a manner from deſtruction, 'doubtleſs, this is but an earneſt of his future 'kind intentions to us: at leaſt his goodneſs 'has decreed to comfort my old age by the 'long life and health of my ſon:—but, per-'haps, he has ſomething greater ſtill in ſtore 'for him; and I ſhall live to ſee the ſame 'hand hereafter crown his head with glory 'and honour.' We may naturally ſuppoſe her innocently carried away with ſuch thoughts, when ſhe is called back by an unexpected

expected diſtemper, which ſurpriſes her ſon, and in one moment, brings down all her hopes;— "for his ſickneſs was ſo ſore, that "there was no breath left in him."——

The expoſtulations of immoderate grief are ſeldom juſt.—For, though Elijah had already preſerved her ſon, as well as herſelf, from immediate death, and was the laſt cauſe to be ſuſpected of ſo ſad an accident, yet the paſſionate mother, in the firſt tranſport, challenges him as the author of her misfortune;—as if he had brought down ſorrow upon a houſe which had ſo hoſpitably ſheltered him. The prophet was too full of compaſſion to make reply to ſo unkind an accuſation. He takes the dead child "out of "his mother's boſom, and laid him upon his "own bed; and he cried unto the Lord, and "ſaid, O Lord my God, haſt thou brought "evil upon the widow with whom I ſojourn, "by ſlaying her ſon?"—'Is this the reward 'of all her charity and goodneſs? Thou haſt 'before this robbed her of the dear partner 'of all her joys and all her cares; and now 'that ſhe is a widow, and has moſt reaſon 'to expect thy protection, behold thou haſt 'withdrawn her laſt prop; thou haſt taken 'away her child, the only ſtay ſhe had to 'reſt on.'—"And Elijah cried unto God, "and ſaid, O Lord my God, I pray thee let "this child's ſoul come into him again."

The prayer was urgent, and beſpoke the diſtreſs of a humane mind deeply ſuffering in the misfortunes of another;—moreover, his heart was rent with other paſſions.—He was

zealous for the name and honour of his God, and thought not only his omnipotence, but his glorious attribute of mercy concerned in the event: for O! with what triumph would the prophets of Baal retort his own bitter taunt, and say, "his God was either talking, "or he was purſuing, or was in a journey; "or, peradventure, he ſlept and ſhould have "been awaked!"—He was moreover involved in the ſucceſs of his prayer himſelf: —honeſt minds are moſt hurt by ſcandal; —and he was afraid leſt ſo foul a one, ſo unworthy of his character, might ariſe among the heathen, who would report with pleaſure, 'Lo! the widow of Zarephath took the 'meſſenger of the God of Iſrael under her 'roof, and kindly entertained him, and ſee 'how ſhe is rewarded! ſurely the prophet 'was ungrateful; he wanted power, or, what 'is worſe, he wanted pity.'

Beſides all this, he pleaded not only the cauſe of the widow,—it was the cauſe of charity itſelf which had received a deep wound already, and would ſuffer ſtill more, ſhould God deny it this teſtimony of his favour. "So the Lord hearkened unto the "voice of Elijah; and the ſoul of the child "came into him again, and he revived. And "Elijah took the child, and brought him "down out of the chamber into the houſe, "and delivered him unto his mother; and "Elijah ſaid, See thy ſon liveth."

It would be a pleaſure to a good mind to ſtop here a moment, and figure to itſelf the picture of ſo joyful an event.—To behold, on

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one hand, the raptures of the parent, overcome with ſurpriſe and gratitude, and imagine how a ſudden ſtroke of ſuch impetuous joy muſt operate on a deſpairing countenance, long accuſtomed to ſadneſs!—To conceive, on the other ſide of the *piece*, the holy man approaching with the child in his arms,—full of honeſt triumph in his looks, but ſweetened with all the kind ſympathy which a gentle nature could overflow with upon ſo happy an event! It is a ſubject one might recommend to the pencil of a great genius, and would even afford matter for deſcription here, but that it would lead us too far from the particular purpoſe for which I have enlarged upon thus much of the ſtory already; the chief deſign of which is to illuſtrate, by a fact, what is evident both in reaſon and ſcripture, that a charitable and good action is ſeldom caſt away; but that, even in this life, it is more than probable, that what is ſo ſcattered ſhall be gathered again with increaſe. "Caſt thy bread upon the waters, and thou "ſhalt find it after many days. Be as a "father unto the fatherleſs, and inſtead of "an huſband unto their mother, ſo ſhalt thou "be as a ſon of the Moſt High, and he will "love thee more than thy mother doth. Be "mindful of good turns, for thou knoweſt "not what evil ſhall come upon the earth; "and when thou falleſt, thou ſhalt find a ſtay. "It ſhall preſerve thee from all affliction, "and fight for thee againſt thy enemies bet-"ter than a mighty ſhield and a ſtrong ſpear."

The great inſtability of temporal affairs, and conſtant fluctuation of every thing in this world, afford perpetual occaſions of taking refuge in ſuch a ſecurity.

What by ſucceſſive misfortunes,—by failings and croſs accidents in trade,—by miſcarriage of projects:—what by unſuitable expences of parents, extravagances of children, and the many other ſecret ways whereby riches make themſelves wings and fly away,—ſo many ſurpriſing revolutions do every day happen in families, that it may not ſeem ſtrange to ſay, that the poſterity of ſome of the moſt liberal contributors here, in the changes which one century may produce, may poſſibly find ſhelter under this very plant which now they ſo kindly water.

Nay, ſo quickly ſometimes has the wheel turned round, that many a man may live to enjoy the benefit of that charity which his own piety projected.

But beſides this, and excluſive of the right which God's promiſe gives to protection hereafter, charity and benevolence, in the ordinary chain of effects, have a natural and more immediate tendency in themſelves to reſcue a man from the accidents of the world, by ſoftening the hearts, and winning every man's wiſhes to its intereſt. When a compaſſionate man falls, who would not pity him? who, that had power to do it, would not befriend and raiſe him up? or, could the moſt barbarous temper offer an inſult to his diſtreſs without pain and reluctance? ſo that

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it is almoſt a wonder that covetouſneſs, even in ſpite of itſelf, does not ſometimes argue a man into charity, by its own principle of looking forwards, and the firm expectation it would delight in of receiving its own again with uſury.—So evident is it, in the courſe of God's providence and the natural ſtream of things, that a good office, one time or other, generally meets with a reward.—— Generally, did I ſay?—how can it ever fail?—when, beſides all this, ſo large a ſhare of the recompenſe is ſo inſeparable, even from the action itſelf. Aſk the man who has a tear of tenderneſs always ready to ſhed over the unfortunate; who, withal, is ready to diſtribute and willing to communicate,—aſk him, if the beſt things which wits have ſaid of pleaſure, have expreſſed what he has felt, when, by a ſeaſonable kindneſs, he has " made the heart of " the widow ſing for joy." Mark then the expreſſions of unutterable pleaſure and harmony in his looks, and ſay, whether Solomon has not fixed the point of true enjoyment in the right place, when he declares, 'that he knew no good there was in any of ' the riches or honours of this world, *but for* ' *a man to do good with them in his life.*' Nor was it without reaſon he had made this judgment.—Doubtleſs, he had found and ſeen the inſufficiency of all ſenſual pleaſures; how unable to furniſh either a rational or a laſting ſcheme of happineſs! how ſoon the beſt of them vaniſhed! the leſs exceptionable in vanity, but the guilty both " in vanity

" and vexation of ſpirit." But that this was of ſo pure and refined a nature, it burned without conſuming: it was figuratively " the " widow's barrel of meal, which waſted not, "—and cruſe of oil, which never failed."

It is not an eaſy matter to add weight to the teſtimony of *the wiſeſt man*, upon the pleaſure of doing good; or elſe the evidence of the philoſopher Epicurus is very remarkable,— whoſe word in this matter is the more to be truſted, becauſe a profeſſed ſenſualiſt; who amidſt all the delicacies and improvements of pleaſure which a luxuriant fancy might ſtrike out, ſtill maintained, that the beſt way of enlarging human happineſs was, by a communication of it to others.

And if it was neceſſary here, or there was time to refine upon this doctrine, one might farther maintain, excluſive of the happineſs which the mind itſelf feels in the exerciſe of this virtue, that the very body of man is never in a better ſtate than when he is moſt inclined to do good offices :—that as nothing more contributes to health than a benevolence of temper, ſo nothing generally is a ſtronger indication of it.

And what ſeems to confirm this opinion is, an obſervation, the truth of which muſt be ſubmitted to every one's reflection ;—namely, That a diſinclination and backwardneſs to do good, is often attended, if not produced, by an indiſpoſition of the animal as well as rational part of us :—ſo naturally do the ſoul and body, as in other caſes ſo in this, mutually

tually befriend or prey upon each other. And, indeed, ſetting aſide all abſtruſer reaſoning upon the point, I cannot conceive but that the very *mechanical motions* which maintain life, muſt be performed with more equal vigour and freedom in that man whom a great and good ſoul perpetually inclines to ſhew mercy to the miſerable, than they can be in a poor, ſordid, ſelfiſh wretch, whoſe little contracted heart melts at no man's affliction, —but ſits brooding ſo intently over its own plots and concerns, as to ſee and feel nothing; and, in truth, enjoy nothing beyond himſelf: and of whom one may ſay what that great maſter of nature has, ſpeaking of a natural ſenſe of harmony, which I think with more juſtice may be ſaid of Compaſſion, that the man who had it not,—

—Was fit for treaſons, ſtratagems, and ſpoils:
The *motions* of his ſpirits are dull as night,
And his affections dark as *Erebus!*
——Let no ſuch man be truſted.——

What Divines ſay of the mind, Naturaliſts have obſerved of the body; that there is no paſſion ſo natural to it as love,—which is the principle of doing good;—and though inſtances like this juſt mentioned, ſeem far from being proofs of it, yet it is not to be doubted, but that every hard-hearted man has felt much inward oppoſition before he could prevail upon himſelf to do aught to fix and deſerve the character: and that what we ſay of long habits of vice, that they are hard to be ſubdued, may, with equal

truth, be ſaid concerning the natural impreſſions of benevolence,—That a man muſt do much violence to himſelf, and ſuffer many a painful ſtruggle, before he can tear away ſo great and noble a part of his nature.—Of this, antiquity has preſerved a beautiful inſtance in an anecdote of Alexander, the tyrant of Pheres, who, though he had ſo induſtriouſly hardened his heart as to ſeem to take delight in cruelty, inſomuch as to murder many of his ſubjects every day, without cauſe and without pity,—yet, at the bare repreſentation of a tragedy which related the misfortunes of Hecuba and Andromache, he was ſo touched with the fictitious diſtreſs which the poet had wrought up in it, that he burſt out into a flood of tears.—The explication of which inconſiſtency is eaſy, and caſts as great a luſtre upon human nature, as the man himſelf was a diſgrace to it. The caſe ſeems to have been this:—In *real* life he had been blinded with paſſions, and thoughtleſsly hurried on by intereſt or reſentment;—but here, there was no room for motives of that kind; ſo that his attention being firſt caught hold of, and all his vices laid aſleep,—then *Nature* awoke in triumph, and ſhewed how deeply ſhe had ſown the ſeeds of compaſſion in every man's breaſt; when tyrants, with vices the moſt at enmity with it, were not able entirely to root it out!

But this is painting an amiable virtue, and ſetting her off with ſhades that wickedneſs lends us; when one might ſafely truſt to the

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force of her own natural charms, and aſk, Whether any thing under Heaven, in its own nature, is more lovely and engaging?—To illuſtrate this the more, let us turn our thoughts within ourſelves, and for a moment let any number of us here imagine ourſelves at this inſtant engaged in drawing the moſt perfect and amiable character, ſuch as, according to our conceptions of the Deity, we ſhould think moſt acceptable to him, and moſt likely to be univerſally admired by all mankind,—I appeal to your own thoughts, whether the firſt idea which offered itſelf to moſt of our imaginations, would not be that of a compaſſionate benefactor, ſtretching forth his hands to raiſe up the helpleſs orphan? Whatever other virtues we ſhould give our hero, we ſhould all agree in making him a generous friend, who thought the opportunities of doing good to be the only charm of his proſperity: we ſhould paint him like the Pſalmiſt's "river of God" overflowing the thirſty parts of the earth, that he might enrich them, carrying plenty and gladneſs along with him. If this was not ſufficient, and we were ſtill deſirous of adding a farther degree of perfection to ſo great a character, we ſhould endeavour to think of ſome one, if human nature could furniſh ſuch a pattern, who, if occaſion required, was willing to undergo all kinds of affliction,—to ſacrifice himſelf,—to forget his deareſt intereſts, and even lay down his life for the good of mankind!—And here,—O merciful Saviour! how would the bright original

ginal of thy unbounded goodneſs break in upon our hearts! "Thou who becameſt "poor, that we might be rich!"—though Lord of all this world, yet "haſt not where to "lay thy head!"—and though equal in power and glory to the great God of Nature, "yet "madeſt thyſelf of no reputation, tookeſt "upon thee the form of a ſervant!"—ſubmitting thyſelf, without opening thy mouth, to all the indignities which a thankleſs and undiſcerning people could offer! and, at length, to accompliſh our ſalvation, "becameſt obe-"dient unto death," ſuffering thyſelf, as on this day*, "to be led like a lamb to the "ſlaughter!"

The conſideration of this ſtupendous inſtance of compaſſion in the Son of God, is the moſt unanſwerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, for the reaſonableneſs of it in himſelf:—it is the great argument which the Apoſtles uſe in almoſt all their exhortations to good works:—"Beloved, "if Chriſt ſo loved us,"—the inference is unavoidable; and gives ſtrength and beauty to every thing elſe which can be urged upon the ſubject. And, therefore, I have reſerved it for my laſt and warmeſt appeal, with which I would gladly finiſh this diſcourſe, that at leaſt for their ſakes for whom it is preached, we might be left to the full impreſſion of ſo exalted and ſo ſeaſonable a motive.—That by reflecting upon the infinite labour of this day's

* Preached on Good Friday.

love,

love, in the inſtance of Chriſt's death, we may conſider what an immenſe debt we owe to each other; and by calling to mind the amiable pattern of his life, in doing good,—we might learn in what manner we may beſt diſcharge it.

And, indeed, of all the methods in which a good mind would be willing to do it, I believe there can be none more beneficial, or comprehenſive in its effects, than that for which we are met here together;—the proper education of poor children being the ground-work of almoſt every other kind of charity, as that which makes every other ſubſequent act of it anſwer the pious expectation of the giver.

Without this foundation firſt laid, how much kindneſs in the progreſs of a benevolent man's life is unavoidably caſt away! and ſometimes where it is as ſenſeleſs as the expoſing a tender plant to all the inclemencies of a cruel ſeaſon, and then going with ſorrow to take it in, when the root is already dead. I ſaid, therefore, this was the foundation of almoſt every kind of charity;—and might one not have added, of all policy too? ſince the many ill conſequences which attend the want of it, though grievouſly felt by the parties themſelves, are no leſs ſo by the community of which they are members; and, moreover, of all miſchiefs, ſeem the hardeſt to be redreſſed,—inſomuch, that when one conſiders the diſloyal ſeductions of popery on one hand,—and, on the other, that no bad man, whatever

ever he profeſſes, can be a good ſubject, one may venture to ſay, it had been cheaper and better for the nation to have borne the expence of inſtilling ſound principles and good morals into the neglected children of the lower ſort, eſpecially in ſome parts of Great Britain, than to be obliged, ſo often as we have been within this laſt century, to riſe up and arm ourſelves againſt the rebellious effects which the want of them has brought down even to our doors. And, in fact, if we are to truſt to antiquity, the truth of which in this caſe we have no reaſon to diſpute, this matter has been looked upon of ſuch vaſt importance to the civil happineſs and peace of a people, that ſome commonwealths, the moſt eminent for political wiſdom, have choſe to make a public concern of it; thinking it much ſafer to be entruſted to the prudence of the magiſtrate, than to the miſtaken tenderneſs, or natural partiality of the parent.

It was conſiſtent with this, and beſpoke a very refined ſenſe of policy in the Lacedæmonians (though by the way, I believe, different from what more modern politics would have directed in like circumſtances), when Antipater demanded of them fifty children, as hoſtages for the ſecurity of a diſtant engagement, they made this brave and wiſe anſwer: 'They 'would not,—they could not conſent:—they 'would rather give him double the number 'of their beſt grown-up men.'—Intimating, that, however they were diſtreſſed, they would chuſe any inconvenience rather than

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ſuffer the loſs of their country's education; and the opportunity (which if once loſt can never be regained) of giving their youth an early tincture of religion, and bringing them up to a love of induſtry, and a love of the laws and conſtitution of their country. If this ſhews the great importance of a proper education to children of all ranks and conditions, what ſhall we ſay then of thoſe whom the providence of God has placed in the very loweſt lot of life, utterly caſt out of the *way* of knowledge, without a parent,—ſometimes may be without a friend to guide and inſtruct them, but what common pity and the neceſſity of their ſad ſituation engage:—where the dangers which ſurround them on every ſide are ſo great and many, that for one fortunate paſſenger in life, who makes his way well in the world with ſuch early diſadvantages, and ſo diſmal a ſetting out, we may reckon thouſands who every day ſuffer ſhipwreck, and are loſt for ever.

If there is a caſe under Heaven which calls out aloud for the more immediate exerciſe of compaſſion, and which may be looked upon as the compendium of all charity, ſurely it is this; and I am perſuaded there would want nothing more to convince the greateſt enemy to theſe kinds of charities that it is ſo, but a bare opportunity of taking a nearer view of ſome of the more diſtreſsful objects of it.

Let him go into the dwellings of the unfortunate; into ſome mournful cottage, where poverty and affliction reign together. There

let him behold the diſconſolate widow,—ſitting,—ſteeped in tears;—thus ſorrowing over the infant ſhe knows not how to ſuccour:—'O my child! thou art now left expoſed to 'a wide and vicious world, too full of ſnares 'and temptations for thy tender and unpractiſed age;'—Perhaps a parent's love may magnify thoſe dangers:—'But when I conſider thou art driven out naked into the 'midſt of them, without friends, without fortune, without inſtruction, my heart bleeds 'before-hand for the evils which may come 'upon thee! God, in whom we truſted, is witneſs, ſo low had his providence placed 'us, that we never indulged one wiſh to have 'made thee rich:—virtuous we would have 'made thee;—for thy father, *my huſband, was 'a good man, and feared the Lord;*—and 'though all the fruits of his care and induſtry 'were little enough for our ſupport, yet he 'honeſtly had determined to have ſpared 'ſome portion of it, ſcanty as it was, to have 'placed thee ſafely in the way of knowledge 'and inſtruction.—But alas! he is gone 'from us, never to return more; and with 'him are fled the means of doing it. For, '*Behold the creditor is come upon us*, to take all 'that we have.'—Grief is eloquent, and will not eaſily be imitated.—But let the man who is the leaſt friend to diſtreſſes of this nature, conceive ſome diſconſolate widow uttering her complaint, even in this manner, and then let him conſider, "if there is any ſorrow "like *this* ſorrow, wherewith the Lord has "afflicted

" afflicted *her?*" or whether there can be any charity like that of taking " the child out of " the mother's boſom," and reſcuing her from theſe apprehenſions? Should a Heathen, a ſtranger to our holy religion and the love it teaches, ſhould he, " as he journeyed, come " to the place where *ſhe lay*, when he ſaw, " would he not have compaſſion on *her?*" God forbid a Chriſtian ſhould *this day* want it! or at any time *look upon* ſuch a diſtreſs, " and paſs by on the other ſide."

Rather, let him do as his Saviour taught him, " bind up the wounds, and pour" comfort into the heart of one whom the hand of God has ſo bruiſed. Let him practiſe what it is, with Elijah's tranſport, to ſay to the afflicted widow,—" See, thy ſon liveth!"—liveth by my charity, and the bounty of this hour, to all the purpoſes which make life deſirable,—to be made a good man and a profitable ſubject:—On one hand, to be trained up to ſuch a ſenſe of his duty, as may ſecure him an intereſt in the world to come;—and, with regard to this world, to be ſo brought up in it to a love of honeſt labour and induſtry, as all his life long to earn and eat his bread with joy and thankfulneſs.

'Much peace and happineſs reſt upon the 'head and heart of every one who thus brings 'children to Chriſt!—May the bleſſing of 'him that was ready to periſh, come ſeaſon-'ably upon him!—The Lord comfort him '*when he moſt wants it!* When he lies ſick 'upon his bed, make thou, O God! all his bed

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'in his ſickneſs! and for what he now ſcat-
'ters, give him, then, that peace of thine
'which paſſeth all underſtanding, and which
'nothing in this world can either give or take
'away!' Amen.

SERMON VI.

PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN IN THE TEMPLE.

LUKE XVIII. 14. first part.

I tell you, this man went down to his houſe juſtified, rather than the other.

THESE words are the judgment which our Saviour has left upon the behaviour and different degrees of merit in the two men, the Phariſee and Publican, whom he repreſents, in the foregoing parable, as going up into the temple to pray. In what manner they diſcharged this great and ſolemn duty, will beſt be ſeen from a conſideration of the prayer which each is ſaid to have addreſſed to God upon the occaſion.

The Phariſee, inſtead of an act of humiliation in that awful preſence before which he ſtood,—with an air of triumph and ſelf-ſufficiency, thanks God that he had not made him like others;—extortioners, adulterers, unjuſt, or even as this publican.—The publican is repreſented as ſtanding afar off, and with a heart touched with humility from a juſt ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, is ſaid only to have ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying, —God be merciful to me a ſinner!—I tell

you, adds our Saviour, this man went down to his houſe juſtified, rather than the other.

Though the juſtice of this determination ſtrikes every one at firſt ſight, it may not be amiſs to enter into a more particular examination of the evidence and reaſons upon which it might be founded, not only becauſe it may place the equity of this deciſion in favour of the publican in a ſtronger light,—but that the ſubject ſeems likely to lead me to a train of reflections not unſuitable to the ſolemnity of the ſeaſon*.

The phariſee was one of that ſect, who, in our Saviour's time, what by the auſterity of their lives,—their public alms-deeds,—and greater pretences to piety than other men, had gradually wrought themſelves into much credit and reputation with the people: and, indeed, as the bulk of theſe are eaſily caught with appearances, their character ſeems to have been admirably well ſuited to ſuch a purpoſe.—If you looked no farther than the outward part of it, you would think it made up of all goodneſs and perfection; an uncommon ſanctity of life, guarded by great decorum and ſeverity of manners,—profuſe and frequent charities to the poor,—many acts of religion,—much obſervance of the law,—much abſtinence,—much prayer.

It is painful to ſuſpect the appearance of ſo much good;—and would have been ſo here, had not our bleſſed Saviour left us their

* Preached in Lent.

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real character upon record, and drawn up by himſelf in one word,—That the ſect were like whitened ſepulchres, all fair and beautiful without, and enriched there with whatever could attract the eye of the beholder; but, when ſearched within-ſide, were full of corruption, and of whatever could ſhock and diſguſt the ſearcher. So that, with all their affectation of piety, and more extraordinary ſtrictneſs and regularity in their outward deportment, all was irregular and uncultivated within;—and all theſe fair pretences, how promiſing ſoever, blaſted by the indulgence of the worſt of human paſſions,—pride,—ſpiritual pride (the worſt of all pride)—hypocriſy, ſelf-love, covetouſneſs, extortion, cruelty, and revenge. What pity it is that the ſacred name of Religion ſhould ever have been borrowed, and employed in ſo bad a work as in covering over ſuch a black catalogue of vices! or that the fair form of virtue ſhould have been thus diſgraced and for ever drawn into ſuſpicion, from the unworthy uſes of this kind to which the artful and abandoned have often put her! The phariſee ſeems to have had not many ſcruples of this kind; and the prayer he makes uſe of in the temple is a true picture of the man's heart, and ſhews with what a diſpoſition and frame of mind he came to worſhip.

God! I thank thee that thou haſt formed me of different materials from the reſt of my ſpecies, whom thou haſt created frail and

vain by nature, but by choice and diſpoſition utterly corrupt and wicked!

Me, thou haſt faſhioned in a different mould, and haſt infuſed ſo large a portion of thy ſpirit into me, lo! I am raiſed above the temptations and deſires to which fleſh and blood are ſubject!—I thank thee that thou haſt made me thus:—not a frail veſſel of clay, like that of other men,—or even this publican, but that I ſtand here a choſen and ſanctified veſſel unto thee!

After this obvious paraphraſe upon the words, which ſpeaks no more than the true ſpirit of the phariſee's prayer,—you would naturally aſk, What reaſon was there for all this triumph?—or what foundation could he have to inſult in this manner over the infirmities of mankind?—or even thoſe of the humble publican who ſtood before him?—Why, ſays he, I faſt twice in the week; I give tythes of all that I poſſeſs.—Truly, a very indifferent account of himſelf;—and if that was all he had to offer in his own behalf, God knows, it was but a weak foundation to ſupport ſo much arrogance and ſelf-conceit; becauſe the obſervance of both the one and the other of theſe ordinances, might be ſuppoſed well enough to be conſiſtent with the moſt profligate of life and manners.

The conduct and behaviour of the publican appear very different;—and, indeed, as much the reverſe to this as you could conceive. But before we enter upon that, as I have

ſpoken

ſpoken largely to the character of the phariſee, 'twill be but juſtice to ſay a word or two in general to his.—The publican was one of that order of men employed by the Roman emperors in levying the taxes and contributions which were from time to time exacted from Judea as a conquered nation. Whether from the particular fate of that employment, owing to the fixed averſion which men have to part with what is their own, or from whatever other cauſes it happened,—ſo it was, that the whole ſet of men were odious; inſomuch, that the name of a publican was a term of reproach and infamy amongſt the Jews.

Perhaps the many inſtances of rigour to which their office might direct them,—heightened ſometimes by a mixture of cruelty and inſolence of their own,—and poſſibly always made to appear worſe than they were by the loud clamours and miſrepreſentations of others,—all might have contributed to form and fix this odium. But it was here, no doubt, as in all other claſſes of men whoſe profeſſions expoſe them to more temptations than that of others,—that there are numbers who ſtill behave well, and who, amidſt all the ſnares and opportunities which lie in their way,—paſs through them, not only with an unblemiſhed character, but with the inward teſtimony of a good conſcience.

The publican, in all likelihood, was one of theſe;—and the ſentiments of candour and humility which the view of his condition in-

ſpired, are ſuch as could come only from a heart and character thus deſcribed.

He goes up into the temple to pay his ſacrifice of prayer;—in the diſcharge of which he pleads no merit of his own,—enters into no compariſon with others,—or juſtification of himſelf with God, but, in reverence to that holier part of the temple where his preſence was ſuppoſed more immediately to be diſplayed,—he keeps afar off,—is afraid to lift up his eyes towards Heaven;—but ſmites upon his breaſt, and in a ſhort but fervent ejaculation,—ſubmiſſively begs God to have mercy upon his ſins.—O God! how precious, how amiable is true humility!—what a difference in thy ſight does it make to conſiſt betwixt man and man! Pride was not made for a creature with ſuch manifold imperfections:—religious pride is a dreſs which ſtill worſe becomes him;—becauſe, of all others, 'tis that to which he has the leaſt pretence:—the beſt of us fall ſeven times a day, and thereby add ſome degree of unprofitableneſs to the character of thoſe who do all that is commanded them.—Was I perfect therefore, ſays Job, I would not know my ſoul, I would be ſilent, I would be ignorant of my own righteouſneſs; for, ſhould I ſay I was perfect, it would prove me to be perverſe. From this introduction I will take occaſion to recommend this virtue of religious humility, which ſo naturally falls from the ſubject, and which cannot more effectually be enforced, than by an enquiry into the chief cauſes which produce

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the oppoſite vice to it,—that of ſpiritual pride;—for in this malady of the mind of man,—the caſe is parallel with moſt others of his body, the dangers of which can never rightly be apprehended; nor can remedies be applied either with judgment or ſucceſs, till they are traced back to their firſt principles, and the ſeeds of the diſorder are laid open and conſidered.

And firſt, I believe, one of the moſt general cauſes of ſpiritual pride, is that which ſeems to have miſled the phariſee:—a miſtaken notion of the true principles of his religion. He thought, no doubt, that the whole of it was comprehended in the two articles of paying tythes and frequent faſting; and that when he had diſcharged his conſcience of them,—he had done all that was required at his hands, and might with reaſon go, and thank God that he had not made him like others.—It is not to be queſtioned, but through force of this error, the phariſee might think himſelf to be, what he pretended, a religious and upright man.—For however he might be brought to act a double and inſincere part in the eyes of men upon worldly views,—it is not to be ſuppoſed—that when he ſtood by himſelf, apart in the temple, and no witneſſes of what paſſed between him and his God,—that he ſhould knowingly and wilfully have dared to act ſo open and barefaced a ſcene of mockery in the face of Heaven. This is ſcarce probable;—and therefore muſt have been owing to ſome deluſion in his edu-

cation, which had early implanted in his mind falſe and wretched notions of the eſſentials of religion,—which, as he grew up, had proved the ſeeds of infinite error, both in practice and ſpeculation.

With the reſt of his ſect, he had been ſo principled and inſtructed as to obſerve a ſcrupulous nicety and moſt religious exactneſs in the leſſer matters of his religion,—its frequent waſhings,—its faſtings and other external rites, of no merit in themſelves,—but to ſtand exempted from the more troubleſome exactneſs in the weightier matters of the law, which were of eternal and unchangeable obligation. So that they were in truth blind guides,—who thus will ſtrain at a gnat and yet ſwallow a camel; and, as our Saviour reproves them from a familiar inſtance of domeſtic inconſiſtency,—would make clean the outſide of the cup and platter,—yet ſuffer the inſide,—the moſt material part,—to be full of corruption and exceſs. From this knowledge of the character and principles of the phariſee, 'tis eaſy to account for his ſentiments and behaviour in the temple, which were juſt ſuch as they would have led one to have expected.

Thus it has always happened, by a fatality common to all ſuch abuſes of religion, as make it to conſiſt in external rites and ceremonies, more than inward purity and integrity of heart.—As theſe outward things are eaſily put in practice, and capable of being attained to without much capacity,

or

or much oppoſition to fleſh and blood,—it too naturally betrays the profeſſors of it into a groundleſs perſuaſion of their own godlineſs, and a deſpicable one of that of others, in their religious capacities, and the relations in which they ſtand towards God: which is the very definition of ſpiritual pride.

When the true heat and ſpirit of devotion is thus loſt and extinguiſhed under a cloud of oſtentatious ceremonies and geſtures, as is remarkable in the Roman church,—where the celebration of high maſs, when ſet off to the beſt advantage with all its ſcenical decorations and finery, looks more like a theatrical performance than that humble and ſolemn appeal which duſt and aſhes are offering up to the throne of God;—when religion, I ſay, is thus clogged and borne down by ſuch a weight of ceremonies, it is much eaſier to put in pretenſions to holineſs upon ſuch a mechanical ſyſtem as is left of it, than where the character is only to be got and maintained by a painful conflict and perpetual war againſt the paſſions. 'Tis eaſier, for inſtance, for a zealous Papiſt to croſs himſelf and tell his beads, than for an humble Proteſtant to ſubdue the luſts of anger, intemperance, cruelty, and revenge, to appear before his Maker with that preparation of mind which becomes him. The operation of being ſprinkled with holy water, is not ſo difficult in itſelf as that of being chaſte and ſpotleſs within,—conſcious of no dirty thought or diſhoneſt action. 'Tis a much ſhorter

way

way to kneel down at a confeſſional and receive abſolution,—than to live ſo to deſerve it,—not at the hands of men,—but at the hands of God,—who ſees the heart, and cannot be impoſed upon.—The atchievement of keeping Lent, or abſtaining from fleſh on certain days, is not ſo hard as that of abſtaining from the works of it at all times;—eſpecially, as the point is generally managed amongſt the richer ſort with ſuch art and epicuriſm at their tables,—and with ſuch indulgence to a poor mortified appetite,—that an entertainment upon a faſt is much more likely to produce a *ſurfeit* than a fit of ſorrow.

One might run the parallel much farther, but this may be ſufficient to ſhew how dangerous and deluſive theſe miſtakes are;—how apt to miſlead and overſet weak minds, which are ever apt to be caught by the pomp of ſuch external parts of religion. This is ſo evident, that even in our own church, where there is the greateſt chaſtity in things of this nature,—and of which none are retained in our worſhip but what, I believe, tend to excite and aſſiſt it,—yet, ſo ſtrong a propenſity is there in our nature to ſenſe, and ſo unequal a match is the underſtanding of the bulk of mankind for the impreſſions of outward things,—that we ſee thouſands who every day miſtake the ſhadow for the ſubſtance; and, was it fairly put to the trial, would exchange the reality for the appearance.

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You ſee this was almoſt univerſally the caſe of the Jewiſh church;—where, for want of proper guard and diſtinction betwixt the means of religion and religion itſelf, the ceremonial part in time eat away the moral part, and left nothing but a ſhadow behind.—'Tis to be feared the buffooneries of the Romiſh church bid fair to do it the ſame ill office, to the diſgrace and utter ruin of Chriſtianity, wherever Popery is eſtabliſhed. What then remains, but that we rectify theſe groſs and pernicious notions of religion, and place it upon its true bottom, which we can only do by bringing back religion to that cool point of reaſon which firſt ſhewed us its obligation, —by always remembering that God is a Spirit,—and muſt be worſhipped ſuitable to his nature, *i. e.* in ſpirit and in truth;—and that the moſt acceptable ſacrifice we can offer him, is a virtuous and an upright mind —and however neceſſary it is, not to leave the ceremonial and poſitive parts of religion undone,—yet, not like the phariſee, to reſt there, —and omit the weightier matters, but keep this in view perpetually, that though the inſtrumental duties of religion are duties of unqueſtionable obligation to us,—yet they are ſtill but Inſtrumental Duties, conducive to the great end of all religion,—which is to purify our hearts—and conquer our paſſions;—and, in a word, to make us wiſer and better men, —better neighbours,—better citizens,—and better ſervants to God.

To whom, &c.

SERMON VII.

VINDICATION OF HUMAN NATURE.

ROMANS XIV. 7.

For none of us liveth to himſelf.

THERE is not a ſentence in ſcripture which ſtrikes a narrow ſoul with greater aſtoniſhment;—and one might as eaſily engage to clear up the darkeſt problem in geometry to an ignorant mind, as make a ſordid one comprehend the truth and reaſonableneſs of this plain propoſition,—No man liveth to himſelf!—Why?—Does any man live to any thing elſe?—In the whole compaſs of human life, can a prudent man ſteer to a ſafer point?—Not live to himſelf!—To whom then?—Can any intereſts or concerns which are foreign to a man's ſelf have ſuch a claim over him that he muſt ſerve under them,—ſuſpend his own purſuits,—ſtep out of his right courſe till others have paſſed by him and attained the ſeveral ends and purpoſes of living before him?

If, with a ſelfiſh heart, ſuch an enquirer ſhould happen to have a ſpeculating head too, he will proceed, and aſk you, Whether this ſame principle which the apoſtle here throws out of the life of man, is not in fact the grand bias of his nature?—That however we may flatter ourſelves with fine-ſpun notions of diſintereſtedneſs and heroiſm in what

what we do; were the moſt popular of our actions ſtripped naked, and the true motives and intentions of them ſearched to the bottom, we ſhould find little reaſon for triumph upon that ſcore.——

In a word, he will ſay, that a man is altogether a bubble to himſelf in this matter, and that after all that can be ſaid in his behalf, the trueſt definition that can be given of him is this, That he is a ſelfiſh animal; and that all his actions have ſo ſtrong a tincture of that character, as to ſhew, to whomever elſe he was intended to live, that in fact he lives only to himſelf.

Before I reply directly to this accuſation, I cannot help obſerving by the way, that there is ſcarce any thing which has done more diſſervice to ſocial virtue than the frequent repreſentations of human nature under this hideous picture of deformity, which by leaving out all that is generous and friendly in the heart of man, has ſunk him below the level of a brute, as if he was a compoſition of all that was mean-ſpirited and ſelfiſh. Surely 'tis one ſtep towards acting well, to think worthily of our nature: and, as in common life the way to make a man honeſt, is to ſuppoſe him ſo, and treat him as ſuch,—ſo here, to ſet ſome value upon ourſelves, enables us to ſupport the character, and even inſpires and adds ſentiments of generoſity and virtue to thoſe which we have already preconceived. The ſcripture tells, That God made man in his own image,—not ſurely in the ſenſitive and corporeal

corporeal part of him: that could bear no reſemblance with a pure and infinite Spirit; —but what reſemblance he bore was undoubtedly in the moral rectitude, and the kind and benevolent affections of his nature. And though the brightneſs of his image has been ſullied greatly by the fall of man in our firſt parents, and the characters of it rendered ſtill leſs legible by the many ſuperinductions of his own depraved appetites ſince,—yet 'tis a laudable pride and a true greatneſs of mind to cheriſh a belief, that there is ſo much of that glorious image ſtill left upon it, as ſhall reſtrain him from baſe and diſgraceful actions; to anſwer which end, what thought can be more conducive than that of our being made in the likeneſs of the greateſt and beſt of Beings? This is a plain conſequence. And the conſideration of it ſhould have in ſome meaſure been a protection to human nature, from the rough uſage ſhe has met with from the ſatirical pens of ſo many of the French writers, as well as of our own country, who with more wit than well-meaning, have deſperately fallen foul upon the whole ſpecies, as a ſet of creatures incapable either of private friendſhip or public ſpirit, but juſt as the caſe ſuited their own intereſt and advantage.

That there is ſelfiſhneſs and meanneſs enough in the ſouls of one part of the world, to hurt the credit of the other part of it, is what I ſhall not diſpute againſt; but to judge of the whole from this bad ſample,

and

and becauſe one man is plotting and artful in his nature;—or, a ſecond openly makes his pleaſure or his profit the whole centre of all his deſigns;—or becauſe a third ſtrait-hearted wretch ſits confined within himſelf, —feels no misfortunes but thoſe which touch himſelf;—to involve the whole race without mercy under ſuch deteſted characters, is a concluſion as falſe as it is pernicious; and was it in general to gain credit, could ſerve no end, but the rooting out of our nature all that is generous, and planting in the ſtead of it ſuch an averſion to each other, as muſt untie the bands of ſociety, and rob us of one of the greateſt pleaſures of it, the mutual communications of kind offices; and by poiſoning the fountain, render every thing ſuſpected that flows through it.

To the honour of human nature, the ſcripture teaches us, that God made man upright; —and though he has ſince found out many inventions, which have much diſhonoured this noble ſtructure, yet the foundation of it ſtands as it was,—the whole frame and deſign of it carried on upon ſocial virtue and public ſpirit, and every member of us ſo evidently ſupported by this ſtrong cement, that we may ſay with the apoſtle, that no man liveth to himſelf. In whatſoever light we view him, we ſhall ſee evidently that there is no ſtation or condition of his life,—no office, or relation, or circumſtance, but there ariſe from it ſo many ties, ſo many indiſpenſable claims upon him, as muſt prepetually

petually carry him beyond any ſelfiſh conſideration, and ſhew plainly, that was a man fooliſhly wicked enough to deſign to live to himſelf alone, he would either find it impracticable, or he would loſe, at leaſt, the very thing which made life itſelf deſirable. We know that our Creator, like an all-wiſe contriver, in this, as in all other of his works, has implanted in mankind ſuch appetites and inclinations as were ſuitable for their ſtate; that is, ſuch as would naturally lead him to the love of ſociety and friendſhip, without which he would have been found in a worſe condition than the very beaſts of the field. No one, therefore, who lives in ſociety, can be ſaid to live to himſelf;—he lives to his God,—to his king, and his country;—he lives to his family, to his friends, to all under his truſt,—and, in a word, he lives to the whole race of mankind:—whatſoever has the character of man, and wears the ſame image of God that he does, is truly his brother, and has a juſt claim to his kindneſs.—That this is the caſe in fact, as well as in theory, may be made plain to any one who has made any obſervations upon human life.—When we have traced it through all its connections,—viewed it under the ſeveral obligations which ſucceed each other in a perpetual rotation through the different ſtages of a haſty pilgrimage, we ſhall find that theſe do operate ſo ſtrongly upon it, and lay us juſtly under ſo many reſtraints, that we are every hour

ſacrificing ſomething to ſociety, in return for the benefits we receive from it.

To illuſtrate this, let us take a ſhort ſurvey of the life of any one man, not liable to great exceptions, but ſuch a life as is common to moſt; let us examine it merely to this point, and try how far it will anſwer ſuch a repreſentation.

If we begin with him in that early age wherein the ſtrongeſt marks of undiſguiſed tenderneſs and diſintereſted compaſſion ſhew themſelves,—I might previouſly obſerve, with what impreſſions he is come out of the hands of God, with the very bias upon his nature which prepares him for the character which he was deſigned to fulfil. But let us paſs by the years which denote childhood, as no lawful evidence, you'll ſay, in this diſpute; let us follow him to the period when he is juſt got looſe from tutors and governors, when his actions may be argued upon with leſs exception: if you obſerve, you will find that one of the firſt and leading propenſities of his nature is, that which diſcovers itſelf in the deſire of ſociety, and the ſpontaneous love towards thoſe of his kind:—and though the natural wants and exigencies of his condition are, no doubt, one reaſon of this amiable impulſe, God having founded that in him as a proviſional ſecurity to make him ſocial,—yet, though it is a reaſon in nature,—'tis a reaſon to him yet undiſcovered. Youth is not apt to philoſophize ſo deeply,—but follows, as it feels itſelf

prompted by the inward workings of benevolence,—without view to itſelf, or previous calculation either of the loſs or profit which may accrue. Agreeably to this, obſerve how warmly, how heartily he enters into friendſhips,—how diſintereſted, and unſuſpicious in the choice of them!—how generous and open in his profeſſions!—how ſincere and honeſt in making them good!—When his friend is in diſtreſs,—what lengths he will go!—what hazards he will bring upon himſelf!—what embarraſſment upon his affairs, to extricate and ſerve him! If man is altogether a ſelfiſh creature, as theſe moralizers would make him, 'tis certain he does not arrive at the full maturity of it in this time of his life.—No. If he deſerves any accuſation, 'tis in the other extreme, "That in his youth he is generally more fool than knave;"—and ſo far from being ſuſpected of living to himſelf, that he lives rather to every body elſe; the unconſciouſneſs of art and deſign, in his own intentions, rendering him ſo utterly void of a ſuſpicion of it in others, as to leave him too oft a bubble to every one who will take the advantage.—But you'll ſay, he ſoon abates of theſe tranſports of diſintereſted love; and as he grows older,—grows wiſer, and learns to live more to himſelf.

Let us examine.——

That a longer knowledge of the world, and ſome experience of inſincerity,—will teach him a leſſon of more caution in the choice of friendſhips,

friendſhips, and leſs forwardneſs in the undiſtinguiſhed offers of his ſervices, is what I grant. But if he cools of theſe, does he not grow warmer ſtill in connections of a different kind? Follow him, I pray you, into the next ſtage of life, where he has entered into engagements, and appears as the father of a family, and you will ſee the paſſion ſtill remains,—the ſtream ſomewhat more confined, —but runs the ſtronger for it:—the ſame benevolence of heart, altered only in its courſe, and the difference of objects towards which it tends. Take a ſhort view of him in this light, as acting under the many tender claims which that relation lays upon him,—ſpending many weary days and ſleepleſs nights, —utterly forgetful of himſelf, intent only upon his family, and with an anxious heart contriving and labouring to preſerve it from diſtreſs, againſt that hour when he ſhall be taken from its protection. Does ſuch a one live to himſelf?—He who riſes early, late takes reſt, and eats the bread of carefulneſs, to ſave others the ſorrow of doing ſo after him: Does ſuch a one live only to himſelf? —Ye, who are parents, anſwer this queſtion for him. How oft have ye ſacrificed your health,—your eaſe,—your pleaſures,—nay, the very comforts of your lives, for the ſake of your children!—How many indulgences have ye given up!—What ſelf-denials and difficulties have ye cheerfully undergone for them!—In their ſickneſs, or reports of their miſconduct, how have ye gone on your way

ſorrowing! What alarms within you, when fancy forebodes but imaginary misfortunes hanging over them!—but when real ones have overtaken them, and miſchief befallen them in the way in which they have gone, how ſharper than a ſword have ye felt the workings of parental kindneſs! In whatever period of human life we look for proofs of ſelfiſhneſs,—let us not ſeek them in this relation of a parent, whoſe whole life, when truly known, is often little elſe but a ſucceſſion of cares, heart-aches, and diſquieting apprehenſions,—enough to ſhew that he is but an inſtrument in the hands of God to provide for the well-being of others, to ſerve their intereſt as well as his own.

If you try the truth of this reaſoning upon every other part or ſituation of the ſame life, you will find it holds good in one degree or other. Take a view of it out of theſe cloſer connections, both of a friend and parent:—conſider him for a moment under that natural alliance in which even a heathen poet has placed him; namely, that of a man;—and as ſuch, to his honour, as one incapable of ſtanding unconcerned in whatever concerns his fellow-creatures.—Compaſſion has ſo great a ſhare in our nature, and the miſeries of this world are ſo conſtant an exerciſe of it, as to leave it in no one's power, who deſerves the name of man, in this reſpect,—to live to himſelf.

He cannot ſtop his ears againſt the cries of the unfortunate.—The ſad ſtory of the fa-

therleſs, and him that has no helper, muſt be heard.—"The ſorrowful ſighing of the pri-"ſoner will come before him;" and a thouſand other untold caſes of diſtreſs to which the life of man is ſubject, find a way to his heart, let intereſt guide the paſſage as it will. —'If he has this world's goods, and ſeeth 'his brother have need, he will not be able to 'ſhut up his bowels of compaſſion from him.'

Let any man of common humanity look back upon his own life as ſubjected to theſe ſtrong claims, and recollect the influence they have had upon him. How oft the mere impulſes of generoſity and compaſſion have led him out of his way!—In how many acts of charity and kindneſs his fellow-feeling for others has made him forget himſelf!—In neighbourly offices, how oft he has acted againſt all conſiderations of profits, convenience, nay ſometimes even of juſtice itſelf! —Let him add to this account, how much, in the progreſs of his life, has been given up even to the leſſer obligations of civility and good manners!—What reſtraints they have laid him under! How large a portion of his time,—how much of his inclination and the plan of life he ſhould moſt have wiſhed, has from time to time been made a ſacrifice to his good-nature, and diſinclination to give pain or diſguſt to others!

Whoever takes a view of the life of man in this glaſs wherein I have ſhewn it, will find it ſo beſet and hemmed in with obliga-

tions of one kind or other, as to leave little room to ſuſpect that man can live to himſelf: and ſo cloſely has our Creator linked us together, as well as all other parts of his works, for the preſervation of that harmony in the frame and ſyſtem of things which his wiſdom has at firſt eſtabliſhed,—that we find this bond of mutual dependence, however relaxed, is too ſtrong to be broke: and I believe, that the moſt ſelfiſh men find it is ſo, and that they cannot, in fact, live ſo much to themſelves as the narrowneſs of their own hearts inclines them. If theſe reflections are juſt upon the moral relations in which we ſtand to each other, let us cloſe the examination with a ſhort reflection upon the great relation in which we ſtand to God.

The firſt and more natural thought on this ſubject, which at one time or other will thruſt itſelf upon every man's mind, is this,—That there is a God who made me,—to whoſe gift I owe all the powers and faculties of my ſoul, to whoſe providence I owe all the bleſſings of my life, and by whoſe permiſſion it is that I exerciſe and enjoy them; that I am placed in this world as a creature of but a day, haſtening to the place from whence I ſhall not return:—that I am accountable for my conduct and behaviour to this great and wiſeſt of Beings, before whoſe judgment-ſeat I muſt finally appear and receive the things done in my body,—whether they are good or whether they are bad.

Can

Can any one doubt but the moſt inconſiderate of men ſometimes ſit down coolly, and make ſome ſuch plain reflections as theſe upon their ſtate and condition?—or, that after they have made them, can one imagine they loſe all effect?—As little appearance as there is of religion in the world, there is a great deal of its influence felt in its affairs;—nor can one ſo root out the principles of it, but like nature they will return again, and give checks and interruptions to guilty purſuits. There are ſeaſons when the thoughts of a juſt God overlooking, and the terror of an after-reckoning, have made the moſt determined tremble and ſtop ſhort in the execution of a wicked purpoſe; and if we conceive that the worſt of men lay ſome reſtraint upon themſelves from the weight of this principle, what ſhall we think of the good and virtuous part of the world, who live under the perpetual influence of it,—who ſacrifice their appetites and paſſions from a conſciouſneſs of their duty to God; and conſider him as the object to whom they have dedicated their ſervice, and make that the firſt principle and ultimate end of all their actions?—How many real and unaffected inſtances there are in the world of men thus governed, will not concern us ſo much to enquire, as to take care that we are of the number: which may God grant, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

TIME AND CHANCE.

ECCLES. IX. 11.

I returned and ſaw, under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, —nor the battle to the ſtrong,—neither yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of ſkill, —but time and chance happeneth to them all.

WHEN a man caſts a look upon this melancholy deſcription of the world, and ſees, contrary to all his gueſſes and expectations, what different fates attend the lives of men, —how oft it happens in the world that there is not even bread to the wiſe, nor riches to men of underſtanding, &c.—he is apt to conclude, with a ſigh upon it,—in the words, tho' not in the ſenſe of the wiſe man, That time and chance happeneth to them all.—That time and chance,—apt ſeaſons and fit conjunctures, have the greateſt ſway in the turns and diſpoſals of mens' fortunes;—and that, as theſe lucky hits (as they are called) happen to be for or againſt a man,—they either open the way to his advancement againſt all obſtacles,—or block it up againſt all helps and attempts. That, as the text intimates, neither *wiſdom*, nor *underſtanding*, nor *ſkill*, ſhall be able to ſurmount them.

However widely we may differ in our reaſonings upon this obſervation of Solomon's, the

the authority of the obſervation is ſtrong beyond doubt, and the evidence given of it in all ages ſo alternately confirmed by examples and complaints, as to leave the fact itſelf unqueſtionable.—That things are carried on in this world ſometimes ſo contrary to all our reaſonings, and the ſeeming probabilities of ſucceſs,—that even the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong;—nay, what is ſtranger ſtill,—nor yet bread to the wiſe, who ſhould laſt ſtand in want of it;—nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, who you would think beſt qualified to acquire them;—nor yet favour to men of ſkill, whoſe merit and pretences bid the faireſt for it;—but that there are ſome ſecret and unſeen workings in human affairs, which baffle all our endeavours,—and turn aſide the courſe of things in ſuch a manner,—that the moſt likely cauſes diſappoint and fail of producing for us the effect which we wiſhed and naturally expected from them.

You will ſee a man, of whom was you to form a conjecture from the appearance of things in his favour,—you would ſay was ſetting out in the world with the faireſt proſpect of making his fortune in it;—with all the advantages of birth to recommend him,—of perſonal merit to ſpeak for him,—and of friends to help and puſh him forwards: you will behold him, notwithſtanding this, diſappointed in every effect you might naturally have looked for from them! every ſtep he takes towards his advancement, ſomething inviſible

inviſible ſhall pull him back, ſome unforeſeen obſtacle ſhall riſe up perpetually in his way, and keep him there.—In every application he makes,—ſome untoward circumſtance ſhall blaſt it.—He ſhall riſe early,—late take reſt, —and eat the bread of carefulneſs,—yet ſome happier man ſhall ſtill riſe up, and ever ſtep in before him, and leave him ſtruggling, to the end of his life, in the very ſame place in which he firſt began it.

The hiſtory of a ſecond ſhall, in all reſpects, be the contraſt to this. He ſhall come into the world with the moſt unpromiſing appearance,—ſhall ſet forwards without fortune, without friends,—without talents to procure him either the one or the other;—nevertheleſs, you will ſee this clouded proſpect brighten up inſenſibly, unaccountably before him; every thing preſented in his way ſhall turn out beyond his expectations;—in ſpite of that chain of unſurmountable difficulties which firſt threatened him,—time and chance ſhall open him a way;—a ſeries of ſucceſsful occurrences ſhall lead him by the hand to the ſummit of honour and fortune, and, in a word, without giving him the pains of thinking, or the credit of projecting it, ſhall place him in ſafe poſſeſſion of all that ambition could wiſh for.

The hiſtories of the lives and fortunes of men are full of inſtances of this nature,—where favourable times and lucky accidents have done for them what wiſdom or ſkill could not: and there is ſcarce any one who

has lived long in the world, who, upon looking backwards, will not diſcover ſuch a mixture of theſe in the many ſucceſsful turns which have happened in this life, as to leave him very little reaſon to diſpute againſt the fact, and, I ſhould hope, as little upon the concluſions to be drawn from it.

Some, indeed, from a ſuperficial view of this repreſentation of things, have atheiſtically inferred,—that becauſe there was ſo much of lottery in this life,—and mere caſualty ſeemed to have ſuch a ſhare in the diſpoſal of our affairs,—that the providence of God ſtood neuter and unconcerned in their ſeveral workings, leaving them to the mercy of time and chance to be furthered or diſappointed as ſuch blind agents directed;—whereas, in truth, the very oppoſite concluſion follows: for, conſider,—if a ſuperior intelligent Power did not ſometimes croſs and over-rule events in this world,—then our policies and deſigns in it would always anſwer according to the wiſdom and ſtratagem in which they were laid, and every cauſe, in the courſe of things, would produce its natural effect without variation. Now, as this is not the caſe, it neceſſarily follows, from Solomon's reaſoning, that, if the race is not to the ſwift, if knowledge and learning do not always ſecure men from want,—nor care and induſtry always make men rich,—nor art and ſkill infallibly make men high in the world, that there is ſome other cauſe which mingles itſelf in human affairs, and governs and turns [illegible] as it pleaſes; which cauſe can be

be no other than the Firſt Cauſe of all things, and the ſecret and over-ruling providence of that Almighty God, who, though his dwelling is ſo high, yet he humbleth himſelf to behold the things that are done on earth, raiſing up the poor out of the duſt, and lifting the beggar from the dunghill; and, contrary to all hopes, putting him with princes, even with the princes of his people; which, by the way, was the caſe of David, who makes the acknowledgment.—And, no doubt,—one reaſon why God has ſelected to his own diſpoſal ſo many inſtances as this, where events have run counter to all probabilities,—was to give teſtimony to his providence in governing the world, and to engage us to a conſideration and dependence upon it, for the event and ſucceſs of our undertakings*. For undoubtedly,—as I ſaid, it ſhould ſeem but ſuitable to nature's laws, that the race ſhould ever be to the ſwift,—and the battle to the ſtrong;—it is reaſonable that the beſt contrivances and means ſhould have beſt ſucceſs;—and ſince it often falls out otherwiſe in the caſe of man, where the wiſeſt projects are overthrown,—and the moſt hopeful means are blaſted, and time and chance happen to all,—you muſt call on the Deity to untie this knot:—for though at ſundry times,—ſundry events fall out,—which we, who look no farther than the events themſelves, call Chance, becauſe they fall out quite contrary both to our intentions

* *Vide* Tillotſon's Sermon on this ſubject.

and our hopes,—yet at the ſame time, in reſpect of God's providence over-ruling in theſe events, it were profane to call them chance, for they are pure deſignation; and though inviſible, are ſtill the regular diſpenſations of the ſuperintending power of that Almighty Being from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived; who, as he has appointed,—ſo holds them as inſtruments in his hand: and, without invading the liberty and free will of his creatures, can turn the paſſions and deſires of their hearts to fulfil his own righteouſneſs, and work ſuch effects in human affairs, which to us ſeem merely *caſual*, —but to him certain and determined; and what his infinite wiſdom ſees neceſſary to be brought about for the government and preſervation of the world, over which Providence perpetually preſides.

When the ſons of Jacob had caſt their brother Joſeph into the pit for his deſtruction, —one would think, if ever any incident which concerned the life of man deſerved to be called Chance, it was this.—That the company of the Iſhmaelites ſhould happen to paſs by, in that open country, at that very place, at that time too, when this barbarity was committed. After he was reſcued by ſo favourable a contingency,—his life and future fortune ſtill depended upon a ſeries of contingencies equally improbable; for inſtance, had the buſineſs of the Iſhmaelites who bought him, carried them from Gilead to any other part of the world beſides Egypt: or, when they arrived

arrived there, had they ſold their bond-ſlave to any other man but Potiphar, throughout the whole empire;—or, after that diſpoſal, had the unjuſt accuſations of his maſter's wife caſt the youth into any other dungeon than that where the king's priſoners were kept;—or had it fallen out at any other criſis than when Pharaoh's chief butler was caſt there too,—had this, or any other of theſe events fallen out otherwiſe than it did,—a ſeries of unmerited misfortunes had overwhelmed him,—and in conſequence, the whole land of Egypt and Canaan. From the firſt opening to the concluſion of this long and intereſting tranſaction, the Providence of God ſuffered every thing to take its courſe:—the malice and cruelty of Joſeph's brethren wrought their worſt miſchief againſt him; baniſhed him from his country and the protection of his parent.—The luſt and baſeneſs of a diſappointed woman ſunk him ſtill deeper;—loaded his character with an unjuſt reproach;—and, to complete his ruin, doomed him, friendleſs, to the miſeries of a hopeleſs priſon, where he lay neglected. Providence, though it did not croſs theſe events,—yet Providence bent them to the moſt merciful ends. When the whole *drama* was opened, then the wiſdom and contrivance of every part of it was diſplayed. Then it appeared, it was not they (as the patriarch inferred in conſolation of his brethren) it was not they that ſold him, but God;—'twas he ſent him thither before them;—his ſuperintending power availed it-

ſelf

ſelf of their paſſions,—directed the operations of them, held the chain in his hand, and turned and wound it to his own purpoſe. "Ye "verily thought evil againſt me,—but God "meant it for good;"—'ye had the guilt of a 'bad intention,—his providence the glory of 'accompliſhing a good one, by preſerving "you a poſterity upon the earth, and bring-"ing to paſs as it is this day, to ſave much "people alive."—All hiſtory is full of ſuch teſtimonies; which, tho' they may convince thoſe who look no deeper than the ſurface of things, that time and chance happen to all,—yet to thoſe who look deeper, they manifeſt at the ſame time, that there is a hand much buſier in human affairs than what we vainly calculate; which though the projectors of this world overlook,—or at leaſt make no allowance for in the formation of their plans, they generally find in the execution of them. And though the fataliſt may urge, that every event in this life is brought about by the miniſtry and chain of natural cauſes,—yet, in anſwer, let him go one ſtep higher,—and conſider,—whoſe power it is that enables theſe cauſes to work;—whoſe knowledge it is that foreſees what will be their effects;—whoſe goodneſs it is that is inviſibly conducting them forwards to the beſt and greateſt ends, for the happineſs of his creatures.

So that, as a great reaſoner juſtly diſtinguiſhes upon this point,—'It is not only re-'ligiouſly ſpeaking, but, with the ſtricteſt and 'moſt philoſophical truth of expreſſion, that the

'the ſcripture tells us, *that God commandeth* the 'ravens;—that they are his directions which '*the winds and the ſeas obey.* If his ſervant 'hides himſelf by the brook, ſuch an order 'of cauſes and effects ſhall be laid,—that the 'fowls of the air ſhall miniſter to his ſupport. 'When this reſource fails, and his prophet is 'directed to go to Zarephath,—for that he 'has *commanded* a widow woman there to 'ſuſtain him,—the ſame hand which leads the 'prophet to the gate of the city,—ſhall lead 'forth the diſtreſſed widow to the ſame place, 'to take him under her roof; and though, 'upon the impulſe of a different occaſion, 'ſhall nevertheleſs be made to fulfil his pro-'miſe and intention of their mutual pre-'ſervation.'

Thus much for the truth and illuſtration of this great and fundamental doctrine of a Providence; the belief of which is of ſuch conſequence to us, as to be the great ſupport and comfort of our lives.

Juſtly, therefore, might the Pſalmiſt upon this declaration, that the Lord is King,—conclude, That the earth may be glad therefore; yea, the multitude of the iſles may be glad thereof.

May God grant the perſuaſion may make us as virtuous as it has reaſon to make us joyful! and that it may bring forth in us the fruits of good living, to his praiſe and glory! —to whom be all might, majeſty, and dominion, now and for evermore! Amen.

SERMON IX.

THE CHARACTER OF HEROD*.

MAT. II. 17, 18.

Then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by Jeremy the prophet, ſaying,—In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, becauſe they are not.

THE words which St. Matthew cites here as fulfilled by the cruelty and ambition of Herod,—are in the 31ſt chapter of Jeremiah, the 15th verſe. In the foregoing chapter, the prophet having declared God's intention of turning the mourning of his people into joy, by the reſtoration of the tribes which had been led away captive into Babylon,—he proceeds, in the beginning of this chapter, which contains this prophecy, to give a more particular deſcription of the great joy and feſtivity of that promiſed day, when they were to return once more to their own land, to enter upon their ancient poſſeſſions, and enjoy again all the privileges they had loſt; and amongſt others, and what was above them all,—the favour and protection of God, and the continuation of his mercies to them and their poſterity.

To make, therefore, the impreſſion of this change the ſtronger upon their minds,—he

* Preached on Innocents Day.

gives a very pathetic repreſentation of the preceding ſorrow on that day when they were firſt led away captive.

Thus ſaith the Lord, a voice was heard in Rama; lamentation and bitter weeping: Rachel weeping for her children, refuſing to be comforted, becauſe they were not.

To enter into the full ſenſe and beauty of this deſcription, it is to be remembered that the tomb of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, as we read in the 35th of Geneſis, was ſituated near Rama, and betwixt that place and Bethlehem. Upon which circumſtance the prophet raiſes one of the moſt affecting ſcenes that could be conceived; for as the tribes in their ſorrowful journey betwixt Rama and Bethlehem, in their way to Babylon, were ſuppoſed to paſs by this monumental pillar of their anceſtor Rachel, Jacob's wife, the prophet, by a common liberty in rhetoric, introduces her as riſing up out of her ſepulchre, and as the common mother of two of their tribes, weeping for her children, bewailing the ſad cataſtrophe of her poſterity led away into a ſtrange land,—refuſing to be comforted, becauſe they were not;—loſt and cut off from their country, and, in all likelihood, never to be reſtored back to her again.

The Jewiſh interpreters ſay upon this, that the patriarch Jacob buried Rachel in this very place, foreſeeing by the ſpirit of prophecy, that his poſterity ſhould that way be led captive, that ſhe might, as they paſſed her, intercede for them.

But

But this fanciful ſuperſtructure upon the paſſage, ſeems to be little elſe than a mere dream of ſome of the Jewiſh doctors; and indeed had they not dreamt it when they did, 'tis great odds, but ſome of the Romiſh dreamers would have hit upon it before now. For as it favours the doctrine of interceſſions, —if there had not been undeniable vouchers for the real inventors of the conceit, one ſhould much ſooner have ſought for it among the oral traditions of this church, than in the Talmud,—where it is.

But this by the bye. There is ſtill another interpretation of the words here cited by St. Matthew, which altogether excludes this ſcenical repreſentation I have given of them. —By which 'tis thought that the lamentation of Rachel here deſcribed, has no immediate reference to Rachel, Jacob's wife, but that it ſimply alludes to the ſorrows of her deſcendants, the diſtreſſed mothers of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim, who might accompany their children led into captivity as far as Rama, in their way to Babylon, who wept and wailed upon this ſad occaſion, and, as the prophet deſcribes them in the perſon of Rachel, refuſing to be comforted for the loſs of her children; looking upon their departure without hope or proſpect of ever beholding a return.

Whichever of the two ſenſes you give the words of the prophet, the application of them by the evangeliſt is equally juſt and faithful; for as the former ſcene he relates was tranſ-

acted upon the very ſame ſtage,—in the ſame diſtrict of Bethlehem, near Rama, where ſo many mothers of the ſame tribe now ſuffered this ſecond moſt affecting blow,—the words of Jeremiah, as the evangeliſt obſerves, were literally accompliſhed; and, no doubt, in that horrid day, a voice was heard again in Rama; lamentation and bitter weeping:—Rachel weeping for her children, and refuſing to be comforted;—every Bethlehemitiſh mother involved in this calamity, beholding it with hopeleſs ſorrow,—gave vent to it,—each one bewailing her children, and lamenting the hardneſs of their lot, with the anguiſh of a heart as incapable of conſolation as they were of redreſs. Monſter!—could no conſideration of all this tender ſorrow ſtay thy hands?—Could no reflection upon ſo much bitter lamentation, throughout the coaſts of Bethlehem, interpoſe and plead in behalf of ſo many wretched objects as this tragedy would make?—Was there no way open to ambition, but that thou muſt trample upon the affections of nature? Could no pity for the innocence of childhood,—no ſympathy for the yearnings of parental love, incline thee to ſome other meaſures for thy ſecurity,—but thou muſt thus pitileſsly ruſh in,—take the victim by violence,—tear it from the embraces of the mother,—offer it up before her eyes,—leave her diſconſolate for ever,—broken-hearted with a loſs,—ſo affecting in itſelf,—ſo circumſtanced with horror, that no time, how friendly ſoever to the memory

ful,—ſhould ever be able to wear out the impreſſion?

There is nothing in which the mind of man is more divided than in accounts of this horrid nature.—For when we conſider man as faſhioned by his Maker,—innocent and upright,—full of the tendereſt diſpoſitions,—with a heart inclining him to kindneſs, and the love and protection of his ſpecies,—this idea of him would almoſt ſhake the credit of ſuch accounts:—ſo that to clear them,—we are forced to take a ſecond view of man,—very different from this favourable one, in which we inſenſibly repreſent him to our imaginations;—that is,—we are obliged to conſider him,—not as he was made,—but as he is;—a creature by the violence and irregularity of his paſſions, capable of being perverted from all theſe friendly and benevolent propenſities, and ſometimes hurried into exceſſes ſo oppoſite to them, as to render the moſt unnatural and horrid accounts of what he does but too probable.—The truth of this obſervation will be exemplified in the caſe before us. For next to the faith and character of the hiſtorian who reports ſuch facts,—the particular character of the perſon who committed them, is to be conſidered as a voucher for their truth and credibility;—and if, upon enquiry, it appears, that the man acted but conſiſtent with himſelf,—and juſt ſo you would have expected from his principles,—the credit of the hiſtorian is reſtored,

and

and the fact related ſtands inconteſtable, from ſo ſtrong and concurring an evidence on its ſide.

With this view, it may not be an unacceptable application of the remaining part of a diſcourſe upon this day, to give you a ſketch of the character of Herod,—not as drawn from Scripture,—for in general it furniſhes us with few materials for ſuch deſcriptions;—the ſacred Scripture cuts off in few words the hiſtory of the ungodly, how great ſoever they were in the eyes of the world;—and, on the other hand, dwells largely upon the ſmalleſt actions of the righteous.—We find all the circumſtances of the lives of Abraham, Iſaac, Jacob, and Joſeph, recorded in the minuteſt manner.—The wicked ſeem only mentioned with regret; juſt brought upon the ſtage, on purpoſe to be condemned. The uſe and advantage of which conduct—is, I ſuppoſe, the reaſon,—as in general it enlarges on no character but what is worthy of imitation. 'Tis however undeniable, that the lives of bad men are not without uſe;—and whenever ſuch a one is drawn, not with a corrupt view to be admired,—but on purpoſe to be deteſted,—it muſt excite ſuch a horror againſt vice, as will ſtrike indirectly the ſame good impreſſion. And though it is painful in the laſt degree to paint a man in the ſhades which his vices have caſt upon him,—yet when it ſerves this end, and at the ſame time illuſtrates a point in ſacred hiſtory,—it carries its own excuſe with it.

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This Herod, therefore, of whom the evangeliſt ſpeaks, if you take a ſuperficial view of his life, you would ſay was a compound of good and evil;—that though he was certainly a bad man,—yet you would think the maſs was tempered at the ſame time with a mixture of good qualities; ſo that in courſe, as is not uncommon, he would appear with two characters, very different from each other. If you looked on the more favourable ſide, you would ſee a man of great addreſs,—popular in his behaviour,—generous,—princelike in his entertainments and expences,—and, in a word, ſet off with all ſuch virtues and ſhowy properties as bid high for the countenance and approbation of the world.

View him in another light, he was an ambitious, deſigning man,—ſuſpicious of all the world,—rapacious,—implacable in his temper,—without ſenſe of religion—or feeling of humanity.—Now, in all ſuch complex characters as this,—the way the world uſually judges is,—to ſum up the good and the bad againſt each other,—deduct the leſſer of theſe articles from the greater, and (as we do in paſſing other accounts) give credit to the man for what remains upon the balance.—Now, though this ſeems a fair,—yet I fear it is often a fallacious reckoning,—which, tho' it may ſerve in many ordinary caſes of private life, yet will not hold good in the more notorious inſtances of men's lives, eſpecially when ſo complicated with good and bad, as to exceed all common bounds and proportions.—

Not to be deceived in ſuch caſes, we muſt work by a different rule; which, though it may appear leſs candid,—yet, to make amends, I am perſuaded will bring us in general much nearer to the thing we want,—which is truth: the way to which is,—in all judgments of this kind, to diſtinguiſh and carry in your eye the principal and ruling paſſion which leads the character,—and ſeparate that from the other parts of it;—and then take notice, how far his other qualities, good and bad, are brought to ſerve and ſupport that. For want of this diſtinction, we often think ourſelves inconſiſtent creatures when we are the fartheſt from it; and all the variety of ſhapes and contradictory appearances we put on, are in truth but ſo many different attempts to gratify the ſame governing appetite.

With this clew, let us endeavour to unravel this character of Herod as here given.

The firſt thing which ſtrikes one in it, is Ambition,—an immoderate thirſt, as well as jealouſy, of power.—How inconſiſtent ſoever in other parts, his character appears invariable in this,—and every action of his life was true to it.—From hence we may venture to conclude, that this was *his* ruling paſſion;—and that moſt, if not all the other wheels, were put in motion by this firſt ſpring. Now let us conſider how far this was the caſe in fact.

To begin with the worſt part of him,—I ſaid he was a man of no ſenſe of religion, or at leaſt no other ſenſe of it but that which

ſerved

ſerved his turn;—for he is recorded to have built temples in Judæa, and erected images in them for idolatrous worſhip,—not from a perſuaſion of doing right, for he was bred a Jew, and conſequently taught to abhor all idolatry;—but he was in truth ſacrificing all this time to a greater idol of his own,—his ruling paſſion; for, if we may truſt Joſephus, his ſole view in ſo groſs a compliance was to ingratiate himſelf with Auguſtus and the great men of Rome, from whom he held his power.—With this he was greedy and rapacious.—How could he be otherwiſe, with ſo devouring an appetite as ambition to provide for?—He was jealous in his nature, and ſuſpicious of all the world.—Shew me an ambitious man that is not ſo; for as ſuch a man's hand, like Iſhmael's, is againſt every man,—he concludes, that every man's hand in courſe is againſt him.

Few men were ever guilty of more aſtoniſhing acts of cruelty;—and yet the particular inſtances of them in Herod were ſuch as he was hurried into by the alarms this waking paſſion perpetually gave him. He put the whole Sanhedrim to the ſword,—ſparing neither age, wiſdom, nor merit!—One cannot ſuppoſe, ſimply from an inclination to cruelty:—no;—they had oppoſed the eſtabliſhment of his power at Jeruſalem.

His own ſons, two hopeful youths, he cut off by a public execution!—The worſt men have natural affection;—and ſuch a ſtroke as this would run ſo contrary to the natural workings

workings of it, that you are forced to ſuppoſe the impulſe of ſome more violent inclination to over-rule and conquer it.—And ſo it was; for the Jewiſh hiſtorian tells us, 'twas jealouſy of power, his darling object,— of which he feared they would one day or other diſpoſſeſs him:—ſufficient inducement to tranſport a man of ſuch a temper into the bloodieſt exceſſes.

Thus far this one fatal and extravagant paſſion accounts for the dark ſide of Herod's character. This governing principle being firſt laid open,—all his other bad actions follow in courſe, like ſo many ſymptomatic complaints from the ſame diſtemper.

Let us ſee if this was not the caſe even of his virtues too.

At firſt ſight, it ſeems a myſtery—how a man ſo black as Herod has been thus far deſcribed,—ſhould be able to ſupport himſelf in the favour and friendſhip of ſo wiſe and penetrating a body of men as the Roman ſenate, of whom he held his power! To counterbalance the weight of ſo bad and deteſted a character,—and be able to bear it up as Herod did, one would think he muſt have been maſter of ſome great ſecret, worth enquiring after.—He was ſo. But that ſecret was no other than what appears on this reverſe of his character.—He was a perſon of great addreſs;—popular in his outward behaviour.—He was generous, prince-like in his entertainments and expences. The world was then as corrupt, at leaſt, as now,—and

Herod

Herod underſtood it;—knew at what price it was to be bought,—and what qualities would bid the higheſt for its good word and approbation.

And, in truth, he judged this matter ſo well,—that, notwithſtanding the general odium and prepoſſeſſion which aroſe againſt ſo hateful a character,—in ſpite of all the impreſſions from ſo many repeated complaints of his cruelties and oppreſſions,—he yet ſtemmed the torrent;—and, by the ſpecious diſplay of theſe popular virtues, bore himſelf up againſt it all his life;—ſo that, at length, when he was ſummoned to Rome to anſwer for his crimes,—Joſephus tells us,—that by the mere magnificence of his expences,—and the apparent generoſity of his behaviour, he entirely confuted the whole charge;—and ſo ingratiated himſelf with the Roman ſenate,—and won the heart of Auguſtus (as he had that of Anthony before) that he ever after had his favour and kindneſs:—which I cannot mention without adding, that it is an eternal ſtain upon the character and memory of Auguſtus, that he ſold his countenance and protection to ſo bad a man, for ſo mean and baſe a conſideration.

From this point of view, if we look back upon Herod,—his beſt qualities will ſhrink into little room; and how glittering ſoever in appearance, when brought to this balance, are found wanting. And, in truth, if we would not willingly be deceived in the value of any virtue or ſet of virtues in ſo complex a character,

character,—we muſt call them to this very account; examine whom they ſerve, what paſſion and what principle they have for their maſter. When this is underſtood, the whole clew is unravelled at once, and the character of Herod, as complicated as it is given us in hiſtory,—when thus analyſed, is ſummed up in three words,—'That he was 'a man of unbounded ambition, who ſtuck 'at nothing to gratify it;'—ſo that not only his vices were miniſterial to his ruling paſſion, but his virtues too (if they deſerve the name) were drawn in, and liſted into the ſame ſervice.

Thus much for the character of Herod;—the critical review of which has many obvious uſes, to which I may truſt you, having time but to mention that particular one which firſt led me into this examination;—namely, That all objections againſt the evangeliſt's account of this day's ſlaughter of the Bethlehemitiſh infants,—from the incredibility of ſo horrid an account,—are ſilenced by this account of the man; ſince, in this, he acted but like himſelf, and juſt ſo as you would expect in the ſame circumſtances, from every man of ſo ambitious a head—and ſo bad a heart.—Conſider, what havoc ambition has made!—how often the ſame tragedy has been acted upon larger theatres,—where not only the innocence of childhood,—or the grey hairs of the aged, have found no protection,—but whole countries, without diſtinction, have been put to the ſword! or,

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what is as cruel, have been driven forth to nakedneſs and famine, to make way for new ones, under the guidance of this paſſion.—For a ſpecimen of this, reflect upon the ſtory related by Plutarch; when, by the order of the Roman ſenate, ſeventy populous cities were unawares ſacked and deſtroyed, at one prefixed hour, by P. Æmilius;—by whom one hundred and fifty thouſand unhappy people were driven in one day into captivity,—to be ſold to the higheſt bidder,—to end their days in cruel labour and anguiſh! As aſtoniſhing as the account before us is, it vaniſhes into nothing from ſuch views, ſince it is plain, from all hiſtory, that there is no wickedneſs too great for ſo unbounded a cauſe,—and that the moſt horrid accounts in hiſtory are, as I ſaid above, but too probable effects of it.

May God of his mercy defend mankind from future experiments of this kind!—and grant we may make a proper uſe of them, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt! Amen.

SERMON X.

JOB'S ACCOUNT OF THE SHORTNESS AND TROUBLES OF LIFE CONSIDERED.

JOB XIV. 1, 2.

Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble;—He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth not.

THERE is ſomething in this reflection of holy Job's, upon the ſhortneſs of life and inſtability of human affairs, ſo beautiful and truly ſublime, that one might challenge the writings of the moſt celebrated orators of antiquity to produce a ſpecimen of eloquence ſo noble and thoroughly affecting. Whether this effect be owing in ſome meaſure to the pathetic nature of the ſubject reflected on; or to the eaſtern manner of expreſſion, in a ſtyle more exalted and ſuitable to ſo great a ſubject; or, which is the more likely account, becauſe they are properly the words of that Being who firſt inſpired man with language, and taught his mouth to utter; who opened the lips of the dumb, and made the tongue of the infant eloquent;—to which of theſe we are to refer the beauty and ſublimity of this, as well as that of numberleſs other paſſages in holy writ, may not ſeem now material; but ſurely, without theſe helps never man was better qualified to make juſt and noble reflections upon the ſhortneſs of life and in-

ſtability of human affairs, than Job was, who had himſelf waded through ſuch a ſea of troubles, and in his paſſage had encountered many viciſſitudes of ſtorms and ſunſhine, and by turns had felt both the extremes of all the happineſs and all the wretchedneſs that mortal man is heir to.

The beginning of his days was crowned with every thing that ambition could wiſh for;—he was the greateſt of all the men of the eaſt,—had large and unbounded poſſeſſions, and no doubt enjoyed all the comforts and advantages of life which they could adminiſter.—Perhaps you will ſay a wiſe man might not be inclined to give a full looſe to this kind of happineſs, without ſome better ſecurity for the ſupport of it than the mere poſſeſſion of ſuch goods of fortune, which often ſlip from under us, and ſometimes unaccountably make themſelves wings and fly away.—But he had that ſecurity too;—for the hand of Providence which had thus far protected, was ſtill leading him forwards, and ſeemed engaged in the preſervation and continuance of theſe bleſſings.—God had ſet a hedge about him, and about all that he had on every ſide; he had bleſſed all the works of his hands, and his ſubſtance increaſed every day. Indeed even with this ſecurity, riches to him that hath neither child nor brother, as the wiſe man obſerves, inſtead of a comfort, prove ſometimes a ſore travel and vexation.—The mind of man is not always ſatisfied with the reaſonable aſſurance of its

own enjoyments, but will look forwards, as if it diſcovers ſome imaginary void; the want of ſome beloved object to fill his place after him, will often diſquiet itſelf in vain, and ſay, "For whom do I labour, and be-"reave myſelf of reſt?"

This bar to his happineſs God had likewiſe taken away, in bleſſing him with a numerous offspring of ſons and daughters, the apparent inheritors of all his preſent happineſs.—Pleaſing reflection! to think the bleſſings God has indulged one's ſelf in, ſhall be handed and continued down to a man's own ſeed! how little does this differ from a ſecond enjoyment of them to an affectionate parent, who naturally looks forward with as ſtrong an intereſt upon his children, as if he was to live over again in his own poſterity!

What could be wanting to finiſh ſuch a picture of a happy man?—Surely nothing, except a virtuous diſpoſition to give a reliſh to theſe bleſſings, and direct him to make a proper uſe of them.—He had that too; for he was a perfect and upright man; one that feared God and eſchewed evil.

In the midſt of all this proſperity, which was as great as could well fall to the ſhare of one man;—whilſt all the world looked gay, and ſmiled upon him, and every thing round him ſeemed to promiſe, if poſſible, an increaſe of happineſs,—in one inſtant all is changed into ſorrow and utter deſpair!

It pleaſed God, for wiſe purpoſes, to blaſt the fortunes of his houſe, and cut off the hopes

hopes of his poſterity, and, in one mournful day, to bring this great prince from his palace down to the dunghill. His flocks and herds, in which conſiſted the abundance of his wealth, were part conſumed by a fire from heaven; the remainder taken away by the ſword of the enemy: his ſons and daughters, whom 'tis natural to imagine ſo good a man had ſo brought up in a ſenſe of their duty, as to give him all reaſonable hopes of much joy and pleaſure in their future lives:—natural proſpect for a parent to look forwards at, to recompenſe him for the many cares and anxieties which their infancy had coſt him! theſe dear pledges of his future happineſs were all, all ſnatched from him at one blow, juſt at the time that one might imagine they were beginning to be the comfort and delight of his old age, which moſt wanted ſuch ſtaves to lean on;—and as circumſtances add to an evil, ſo they did to this;—for it fell out, not only by a very calamitous accident, which was grievous enough in itſelf, but likewiſe upon the back of his other misfortunes, when he was ill prepared to bear ſuch a ſhock; and what would ſtill add to it, it happened at an hour when he had leaſt reaſon to expect it, when he would naturally think his children ſecure and out of the way of danger:—
"For whilſt they were feaſting and making
"merry in their eldeſt brother's houſe, a
"great wind out of the wilderneſs ſmote the
"four corners of the houſe, and it fell upon
"them."

Such a concurrence of misfortunes is not the common lot of many; and yet there are inſtances of ſome who have undergone as ſevere trials, and bravely ſtruggled under them; perhaps by natural force of ſpirits, the advantages of health, and the cordial aſſiſtance of a friend. And with theſe helps, what may not a man ſuſtain?—But this was not Job's caſe; for ſcarce had theſe evils fallen upon him, when he was not only borne down with a grievous diſtemper which afflicted him from the crown of his head to the ſole of his foot, but likewiſe his three friends, in whoſe kind conſolations he might have found a medicine, —even the wife of his boſom, whoſe duty it was with a gentle hand to have ſoftened all his ſorrows,—inſtead of doing this, they cruelly inſulted and became the reproachers of his integrity! O God! what is man when thou bruiſeſt him, and makeſt his burden heavier, as his ſtrength grows leſs!—Who, that had found himſelf thus an example of the many changes and chances of this mortal life;—when he conſidered himſelf now ſtripped and left deſtitute of ſo many valuable bleſſings which the moment before thy providence had poured upon his head;—when he reflected upon this gay delightſome ſtructure, in appearance ſo ſtrongly built, ſo pleaſingly ſurrounded with every thing that could flatter his hopes and wiſhes, and beheld it all levelled with the ground in one moment, and the whole proſpect vaniſh with it, like the deſcription of an enchantment,—who I ſay that

that had ſeen and felt the ſhock of ſo ſudden a revolution, would not have been furniſhed with juſt and beautiful reflections upon the occaſion, and ſaid with Job in the words of the text, that "Man that is born of a woman, "is of few days, and full of miſery;—that he "cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; "he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth "not!"

The words of the text are an epitome of the natural and moral vanity of man; and contain two diſtinct declarations concerning his ſtate and condition in each reſpect.

Firſt, That he is a creature of few days; and ſecondly, That thoſe days are full of trouble.

I ſhall make ſome reflections upon each of theſe in their order, and conclude with a practical leſſon from the whole.

And firſt, That he is of few days. The compariſon which Job makes uſe of, 'That man cometh forth like a flower,' is extremely beautiful, and more to the purpoſe than the moſt elaborate proof, which in truth the ſubject will not eaſily admit of;—the ſhortneſs of life being a point ſo generally complained of in all ages ſince the flood, and ſo univerſally felt and acknowledged by the whole ſpecies, as to require no evidence beyond a ſimilitude; the intent of which is not ſo much to prove the fact, as to illuſtrate and place it in ſuch a light as to ſtrike us, and bring the impreſſion home to ourſelves in a more affecting manner.

Man

Man comes forth, ſays Job, like a flower, and is cut down;—he is ſent into the world the faireſt and nobleſt part of God's works,—faſhioned after the image of his Creator with reſpect to reaſon and the great faculties of the mind; he cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field: as it ſurpaſſes the vegetable world in beauty, ſo does he the animal world in the glory and excellencies of his nature.

The one,—if no untimely accident oppreſs it, ſoon arrives at the full period of its perfection,—is ſuffered to triumph for a few moments, and is plucked up by the roots in the very pride and gayeſt ſtage of its being:—or, if it happens to eſcape the hands of violence, in a few days it neceſſarily ſickens of itſelf and dies away.

Man likewiſe, though his progreſs is ſlower, and his duration ſomething longer, yet the periods of his growth and declenſion are nearly the ſame, both in the nature and manner of them.

If he eſcapes the dangers which threaten his tender years, he is ſoon got into the full maturity and ſtrength of life; and if he is ſo fortunate as not to be hurried out of it then by accidents, by his own folly and intemperance;—if he eſcapes theſe, he naturally decays of himſelf;—a period comes faſt upon him, beyond which he was not made to laſt.——Like a flower or fruit which may be plucked up by force before the time of their maturity, yet cannot be made to outgrow the

period

period when they are to fade and drop of themſelves; when that comes, the hand of nature then plucks them both off, and no art of the botaniſt can uphold the one, or ſkill of the phyſician preſerve the other, beyond the periods to which their original frames and conſtitutions were made to extend. As God has appointed and determined the ſeveral growths and decays of the vegetable race, ſo he ſeems as evidently to have preſcribed the ſame laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the firſt rudiments of which there are contained the ſpecific powers of their growth, duration, and extinction; and when the evolutions of thoſe animal powers are exhauſted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itſelf, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preſerved beyond its bloom drops and periſhes upon the ſtalk.

Thus much for this compariſon of Job's, which, though it is very poetical, yet conveys a juſt idea of the thing referred to.——"That "he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth "not,"—is no leſs a faithful and fine repreſentation of the ſhortneſs and vanity of human life; of which one cannot give a better explanation, than by referring to the original, from whence the picture was taken.—With how quick a ſucceſſion do days, months, and years paſs over our heads!—how truly like a ſhadow that departeth, do they flee away inſenſibly, and ſcarce leave an impreſſion with us!——When we endeavour to call

them back by reflection, and conſider in what manner they have gone, how unable are the beſt of us to give a tolerable account!—and were it not for ſome of the more remarkable ſtages which have diſtinguiſhed a few periods of this rapid progreſs,—we ſhould look back upon it all as Nebuchadnezzar did upon his dream when he awoke in the morning:—he was ſenſible many things had paſſed, and troubled him too, but had paſſed on ſo quickly, they had left no footſteps behind, by which he could be enabled to trace them back.——Melancholy account of the life of man! which generally runs on in ſuch a manner, as ſcarce to allow time to make reflections which way it has gone!

How many of our firſt years ſlide by in the innocent ſports of childhood, in which we are not able to make reflections upon them!—how many more thoughtleſs years eſcape us in our youth, when we are unwilling to do it, and are ſo eager in the purſuit of pleaſure, as to have no time to ſpare, to ſtop and conſider them!

When graver and riper years come on, and we begin to think it time to reform and ſet up for men of ſenſe and conduct, then the buſineſs and perplexing intereſts of this world, and the endleſs plotting and contriving how to make the moſt of it, do ſo wholly employ us, that we are too buſy to make reflections upon ſo unprofitable a ſubject.—As families, and children increaſe, ſo do our affections,

and with them are multiplied our cares and toils for their preſervation and eſtabliſhment; —all which take up our thoughts ſo cloſely, and poſſeſs them ſo long, that we are often overtaken by grey hairs before we ſee them, or have found leiſure to conſider how far we were got,—what we have been doing,—and for what purpoſe God ſent us into the world! As man may juſtly be ſaid to be of few days, conſidered with reſpect to this haſty ſucceſſion of things, which ſoon carries him into the decline of his life,—ſo may he likewiſe be ſaid to flee like a ſhadow and continue not, when his duration is compared with other parts of God's works, and even the works of his own hands, which outlaſt him many generations;—whilſt (as Homer obſerves) like leaves, one generation drops—and another ſprings up,—to fall again and be forgotten.

But when we farther conſider his days in the light in which we ought chiefly to view them, as they appear in thy ſight, O God! with whom a thouſand years are but as yeſterday; when we reflect that this hand-breadth of life is all that is meaſured out to man from that eternity for which he is created, how does his ſhort ſpan vaniſh to nothing in the compariſon! 'Tis true, the greateſt portion of time will do the ſame when compared with what is to come; and therefore ſo ſhort and tranſitory a one as threeſcore years and ten, beyond which all is declared to be labour and ſorrow, may the eaſier be allowed: and yet how uncertain are we of that portion,

tion, ſhort as it is! Do not ten thouſand accidents break off the ſlender thread of human life, long before it can be drawn out to that extent?—The new-born babe falls down an eaſy prey, and moulders back again into duſt, like a tender bloſſom put forth in an untimely hour.—The hopeful youth in the very pride and beauty of his life is cut off; ſome cruel diſtemper or unthought-of accident lays him proſtrate upon the earth (to purſue Job's compariſon) like a blooming flower, ſmit and ſhrivelled up with a malignant blaſt.—In this ſtage of life, chances multiply upon us,—the ſeeds of diſorders are ſown by intemperance or neglect,—infectious diſtempers are more eaſily contracted; when contracted, they rage with greater violence, and the ſucceſs in many caſes is more doubtful, inſomuch that they who have exerciſed themſelves in computations of this kind, tell us, "That one half of the whole ſpecies "which are born into the world, go out of it "again, and are all dead in ſo ſhort a ſpace "as the firſt ſeventeen years."

Theſe reflections may be ſufficient to illuſtrate the firſt part of Job's declaration, "That "man is of few days." Let us examine the truth of the other, and ſee whether he is not likewiſe full of trouble.

And here we muſt not take our account from the flattering outſide of things, which are generally ſet off with a glittering appearance enough, eſpecially in what is called Higher Life.—Nor can we ſafely truſt the evidence of

ſome of the more merry and thoughtleſs amongſt us, who are ſo ſet upon the enjoyment of life, as ſeldom to reflect upon the troubles of it;—or who, perhaps, becauſe they are not yet come to this portion of their inheritance, imagine it is not their common lot.—Nor, laſtly, are we to form an idea of it from the deluſive ſtories of a few of the moſt proſperous paſſengers, who have fortunately ſailed through and eſcaped the rougher toils and diſtreſſes:—but we are to take our account from a cloſe ſurvey of human life, and the real face of things, ſtript of every thing that can palliate or gild it over. We muſt hear the general complaint of all ages, and read the hiſtories of mankind. If we look into them, and examine them to the bottom, what do they contain but the hiſtory of ſad and uncomfortable paſſages, which a good-natured man cannot read but with oppreſſion of ſpirits!—Conſider the dreadful ſucceſſion of wars in one part or other of the earth, perpetuated from one century to another with ſo little intermiſſion, that mankind have ſcarce had time to breathe from them, ſince ambition firſt came into the world! conſider the horrid effects of them in all thoſe barbarous devaſtations we read of, where whole nations have been put to the ſword, or have been driven out to nakedneſs and famine, to make room for new-comers!—Conſider how great a part of our ſpecies, in all ages down to this, have been trod under the feet of cruel and capricious tyrants, who would neither hear their cries, nor pity their diſtreſſes!

diſtreſſes!—Conſider ſlavery,—what it is,—how bitter a draught, and how many millions have been made to drink of it!—which, if it can poiſon all earthly happineſs, when exerciſed barely upon our bodies, what muſt it be when it comprehends both the ſlavery of body and mind!—To conceive this, look into the hiſtory of the Romiſh church and her tyrants, or rather executioners, who ſeem to have taken pleaſure in the pangs and convulſions of their fellow-creatures!—Examine the inquiſition, hear the melancholy notes ſounded in every cell!—Conſider the anguiſh of mock trials, and the exquiſite tortures conſequent thereupon, mercileſsly inflicted upon the unfortunate, where the racked and weary ſoul has ſo often wiſhed to take its leave,—but cruelly not ſuffered to depart!—Conſider how many of theſe helpleſs wretches have been hauled from thence in all periods of this tyrannic uſurpation, to undergo the maſſacres and flames to which a falſe and a bloody religion has condemned them!

If this ſad hiſtory and detail of the more public cauſes of the miſeries of man are not ſufficient, let us behold him in another light, with reſpect to the more private cauſes of them, and ſee whether he is not full of trouble likewiſe there, and almoſt born to it as naturally as the ſparks fly upwards. If we conſider man as a creature full of wants and neceſſities, whether real or imaginary, which he is not able to ſupply of himſelf,—what a train of diſappointments, vexations, and dependencies

pendencies are to be ſeen iſſuing from thence, to perplex and make his being uneaſy!—— How many joſtlings and hard ſtruggles do we undergo, in making our way in the world!— How barbarouſly held back!—How often and baſely overthrown, in aiming only at getting bread!—How many of us never attain it,—at leaſt not comfortably,—but, from various and unknown cauſes,—eat it all our lives long in bitterneſs!

If we ſhift the ſcene, and look upwards, towards thoſe whoſe ſituation in life ſeems to place them above the ſorrows of this kind, yet where are they exempt from others? Do not all ranks and conditions of men meet with ſad accidents and numberleſs calamities in other reſpects? which often make them go heavily all their lives long!

How many fall into chronical infirmities, which render both their days and nights reſtleſs and inſupportable!——How many of the higheſt rank are tore up with ambition, or ſoured with diſappointments! and how many more, from a thouſand ſecret cauſes of diſquiet, pine away in ſilence, and owe their deaths to ſorrow and dejection of heart!—— If we caſt our eyes upon the loweſt claſs and condition of life,—the ſcene is more melancholy ſtill.—Millions of our fellow-creatures, born to no inheritance but poverty and trouble, forced by the neceſſity of their lots to drudgery and painful employments, and hard ſet with that too, to get enough to keep themſelves

ſelves and families alive!—So that upon the whole, when we have examined the true ſtate and condition of human life, and have made ſome allowances for a few fugacious, deceitful pleaſures, there is ſcarce any thing to be found which contradicts Job's deſcription of it.—Whichever way we look abroad, we ſee ſome legible characters of what God firſt denounced againſt us, "That in ſorrow we "ſhould eat our bread, till we return to the "ground from whence we were taken*."

But ſome one will ſay, Why are we thus to be put out of love with human life? To what purpoſe is it to expoſe the dark ſides of it to us, or enlarge upon the infirmities which are natural, and conſequently out of our power to redreſs?

I anſwer, That the ſubject is nevertheleſs of great importance, ſince it is neceſſary every creature ſhould underſtand his preſent ſtate and condition, to put him in mind of behaving ſuitably to it.—Does not an impartial ſurvey of man,—the holding up this glaſs to ſhew him his defects and natural infirmities, naturally tend to cure his pride, and clothe him with humility? which is a dreſs that beſt becomes a ſhort-lived and a wretched creature.—Does not the conſideration of the ſhortneſs of our life, convince us of the wiſdom of dedicating ſo ſmall a portion to the great pupoſes of eternity?

* Moſt of theſe reflections upon the miſeries of life are taken from Woollaſton.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, When we reflect that this ſpan of life, ſhort as it is, is chequered with ſo many troubles, that there is nothing in this world ſprings up, or can be enjoyed without a mixture of ſorrow, how inſenſibly does it incline us to turn our eyes and affections from ſo gloomy a proſpect, and fix them upon that happier country, where afflictions cannot follow us, and where God will wipe away all tears from off our faces for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON XI.

EVIL-SPEAKING.

JAMES I. 26.

If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.

OF the many duties owing both to God and our neighbour, there are ſcarce any men ſo bad as not to acquit themſelves of ſome; and few ſo good, I fear, as to practiſe all.

Every man ſeems willing enough to compound the matter, and adopt ſo much of the ſyſtem as will leaſt interfere with his principal and ruling paſſion; and for thoſe parts which would occaſion a more troubleſome oppoſition, to conſider them as hard ſayings, and ſo leave them for thoſe to practiſe, whoſe natural tempers are better ſuited to the ſtruggle; ſo that a man ſhall be covetous, oppreſſive, revengeful, neither a lover of truth nor common honeſty, and yet at the ſame time ſhall be *very* religious, and ſo ſanctified, as not once to fail of paying his morning and evening ſacrifice to God. So, on the other hand, a man ſhall live without God in the world, have neither any great ſenſe of religion, nor indeed pretend to have any, and yet be of niceſt honour, conſcientiouſly juſt and fair in all his dealings. And here it is

that

that men generally betray themſelves, deceiving, as the apoſtle ſays, their own hearts; of which the inſtances are ſo various, in one degree or other, throughout human life, that one might ſafely ſay, the bulk of mankind live in ſuch a contradiction to themſelves, that there is no character ſo hard to be met with as one which, upon a critical examination, will appear altogether uniform, and in every point conſiſtent with itſelf.

If ſuch a contraſt was only obſervable in the different ſtages of a man's life, it would ceaſe to be either a matter of wonder or of juſt reproach. Age, experience, and much reflection, may naturally enough be ſuppoſed to alter a man's ſenſe of things, and ſo entirely to transform him, that, not only in outward appearances, but in the very caſt and turn of his mind, he may be as unlike and different from the man he was twenty or thirty years ago, as he ever was from any thing of his own ſpecies. This, I ſay, is naturally to be accounted for, and in ſome caſes might be praiſeworthy too; but the obſervation is to be made of men in the ſame period of their lives, that in the ſame day, ſometimes in the very ſame action, they are utterly inconſiſtent and irreconcileable with themſelves.—Look at a man in one light, and he ſhall ſeem wiſe, penetrating, diſcreet, and brave; behold him in another point of view, and you ſee a creature all over folly and indiſcretion, weak and timorous as cowardice

dice and indiſcretion can make him. A man ſhall appear gentle, courteous, and benevolent to all mankind: follow him into his own houſe, may be you ſee a tyrant, moroſe and ſavage to all whoſe happineſs depends upon his kindneſs. A third in his general behaviour is found to be generous, diſintereſted, humane, and friendly:—hear but the ſad ſtory of the friendleſs orphans, too credulouſly truſting all their little ſubſtance into his hands, and he ſhall appear more ſordid, more pityleſs and unjuſt than the injured themſelves have bitterneſs to paint him. Another ſhall be charitable to the poor, uncharitable in his cenſures and opinions of all the reſt of the world beſides;—temperate in his appetites, intemperate in his tongue: ſhall have too much conſcience and religion to cheat the man who truſts him, and, perhaps, as far as the buſineſs of debtor and creditor extends, ſhall be juſt and ſcrupulous to the uttermoſt mite; yet, in matters of full as great concern, where he is to have the handling of the party's reputation and good name,—the deareſt the tendereſt property the man has, he will do him irreparable damage, and rob him there without meaſure or pity.

And this ſeems to be that particular piece of inconſiſtency and contradiction which the text is levelled at, in which the words ſeem ſo pointed, as if St. James had known more flagrant inſtances of this kind of deluſion than what had fallen under the obſervation of

of any of the reſt of the apoſtles; he being more remarkably vehement and copious upon that ſubject than any other.

Doubtleſs, ſome of his converts had been notoriouſly wicked and licentious in this remorſeleſs practice of defamation and evil-ſpeaking. Perhaps the holy man, though ſpotleſs as an angel (for no character is too ſacred for calumny to blacken) had grievouſly ſuffered himſelf, and, as his bleſſed Maſter foretold him, had been cruelly reviled and evil *ſpoken* of.

All his labours in the goſpel, his unaffected and perpetual ſolicitude for the preſervation of his flock, his watchings and faſtings, his poverty, his natural ſimplicity and innocence of life, *all* perhaps were not enough to defend him from this unruly weapon, ſo full of deadly poiſon:—and what, in all likelihood, might move his ſorrow and indignation more, ſome who ſeemed the moſt devout and zealous of all his converts, were the moſt mercyleſs and uncharitable in that reſpect: having a form of godlineſs, full of bitter envyings and ſtrife.

With ſuch it is that he expoſtulates ſo largely in the third chapter of his epiſtle: and there is ſomething in his vivacity tempered with ſuch affection and concern, as well ſuited the character of an inſpired man. My brethren, ſays the apoſtle, theſe things ought not to be.—The wiſdom that is from above, is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, without partiality, without hypocriſy. —The wiſdom from above,—that heavenly

religion which I have preached to you, is pure, alike, and conſiſtent with itſelf in all its parts; like its great Author, 'tis univerſally kind and benevolent in all caſes and circumſtances. Its firſt glad tidings were peace upon earth, good-will towards men; its chief corner-ſtone, its moſt diſtinguiſhing character is Love,—that kind principle which brought it down, in the pure exerciſe of which conſiſts the chief enjoyment of Heaven, from whence it came. But this practice, my brethren, cometh not from above, but it is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh, full of confuſion and every evil work. Reflect then a moment:—Can a fountain ſend forth, at the ſame place, ſweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? Lay your hands upon your hearts, and let your conſciences ſpeak.—Ought not the ſame juſt principle, which reſtrains you from cruelty and wrong in one caſe, equally to withhold you from it in another?—Should not charity and good-will, like the principle of life, circulating through the ſmalleſt veſſels in every member, ought it not to operate as regularly upon you throughout, as well upon your words as upon your actions?

If a man is wiſe and endued with knowledge, let him ſhew it out of a good converſation, with meekneſs of wiſdom. But,—if any man amongſt you ſeemeth to be religious—(ſeemeth to be,—for truly religious he cannot be)—and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

vain.—This is the full force of St. James's reaſoning, upon which I have dwelt the more, it being the foundation upon which is grounded this clear deciſion of the matter left us in the text:—in which the apoſtle ſeems to have ſet the two characters of a ſaint and a ſlanderer at ſuch variance, that one would have thought they could never have had a heart to have met together again. But there are no alliances too ſtrange for this world.—How many may we obſerve every day, even of the gentler ſex as well as our own, who, without conviction of doing much wrong, in the midſt of a full career of calumny and defamation, riſe up punctual at the ſtated hour of prayer, leave the cruel ſtory half untold till they return;—go,—and kneel down before the throne of Heaven, thank God that he had not made them like others, and that his Holy Spirit had enabled them to perform the duties of the day in ſo chriſtian and conſcientious a manner.

This deluſive itch for ſlander, too common in all ranks of people, whether to gratify a little ungenerous reſentment; whether oftener out of a principle of levelling, from a narrowneſs and poverty of ſoul, ever impatient of merit and ſuperiority in others;—whether from a mean ambition, or the inſatiate luſt of being witty (a talent in which ill-nature and malice are no ingredients);—or laſtly, whether from a natural cruelty of diſpoſition, abſtracted from all views and conſiderations of ſelf:—to which one, or whether to all jointly, we are indebted for this contagious malady,

thus much is certain, from whatever ſeeds it ſprings, the growth and progreſs of it are as deſtructive to as they are unbecoming a civilized people. To paſs a hard and ill-natured reflection upon an undeſigning action;—to invent, or which is equally bad, to propagate a vexatious report without colour and grounds;—to plunder an innocent man of his character and good name, a jewel which, perhaps, he has ſtarved himſelf to purchaſe, and probably would hazard his life to ſecure;—to rob him at the ſame time of his happineſs and peace of mind, perhaps his bread,—the bread, may be, of a virtuous family; and all this, as Solomon ſays of the madman who caſteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and ſaith, Am I not in ſport? all this out of wantonneſs, and oftener from worſe motives,—the whole appears ſuch a complication of badneſs, as requires no words or warmth of fancy to aggravate. Pride, treachery, envy, hypocriſy, malice, cruelty, and ſelf-love, may have been ſaid, in one ſhape or other, to have occaſioned all the frauds and miſchiefs that ever happened in the world; but the chances againſt a coincidence of them all in one perſon are ſo many, that one would have ſuppoſed the character of a common ſlanderer as rare and difficult a production in nature as that of a great genius, which ſeldom happens above once in an age.

But whatever was the caſe when St. James wrote his epiſtle, we have been very ſucceſsful in later days, and have found out the art,

by

by a proper management of light and ſhade, to compound all theſe vices together, ſo as to give body and ſtrength to the whole, whilſt no one but a diſcerning artiſt is able to diſcover the labours that join in finiſhing the picture;—and, indeed, like many other bad originals in the world,—it ſtands in need of all the diſguiſe it has.—For who could be enamoured of a character made up of ſo loathſome a compound,—could they behold it naked,—in its crooked and deformed ſhape,—with all its natural and deteſted infirmities laid open to public view?

And, therefore, it were to be wiſhed, that one would do in this malignant caſe of the mind,—what is generally done for the public good in the more malignant and epidemical caſes of the body;—that is,—When they are found infectious,—to write a hiſtory of the diſtemper,—and aſcertain all the ſymptoms of the malady, ſo that every one might know whom he might venture to go near, with tolerable ſafety to himſelf.—But alas! the ſymptoms of this appear in ſo many ſtrange and contradictory ſhapes, and vary ſo wonderfully with the temper and habit of the patient, that they are not to be claſſed,—nor reduced to any one regular ſyſtem.

Ten thouſand are the vehicles in which this deadly poiſon is prepared and communicated to the world;—and, by ſome artful hands, 'tis done by ſo ſubtle and nice an infuſion, that it is not to be taſted or diſcovered but by its effects.

How frequently is the honeſty and integrity of a man diſpoſed of by a ſmile or a ſhrug!—How many good and generous actions have been ſunk into oblivion by a diſtruſtful look!—or ſtamped with the imputation of proceeding from bad motives, by a myſterious and ſeaſonable whiſper!

Look into companies of thoſe whoſe gentle natures ſhould diſarm them,—we ſhall find no better account.—How large a portion of chaſtity is ſent out of the world by diſtant hints,—nodded away, and cruelly winked into ſuſpicion by the envy of thoſe who are paſt all temptation of it themſelves!—How often does the reputation of a helpleſs creature bleed by report,—which the party who is at the pains to propagate it, beholds with much pity and fellow-feeling!—that ſhe is heartily ſorry for it,—hopes in God it is not true!—however, as Archbiſhop Tillotſon wittily obſerves upon it, is reſolved, in the mean time, to give the report her paſs, that at leaſt it may have fair play to take its fortune in the world,—to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it ſhall happen to fall.

So fruitful is this vice in a variety of experiments, to ſatiate as well as diſguiſe itſelf. But if theſe ſmoother weapons cut ſo ſore,—what ſhall we ſay of open and unbluſhing ſcandal,—ſubjected to no caution,—tied down to no reſtraints?—If the one, like an arrow ſhot in the dark, does nevertheleſs ſo much ſecret miſchief,—this, like the peſtilence which rageth

rageth at noon-day, ſweeps all before it, levelling without diſtinction the good and the bad; a thouſand fall beſide it, and ten thouſand on its right hand;—they fall,—ſo rent and torn in this tender part of them, ſo unmercifully butchered, as ſometimes never to recover either the wounds or the anguiſh of heart which they have occaſioned.

But there is nothing ſo bad which will not admit of ſomething to be ſaid in its defence.

And here it may be aſked,—Whether the inconveniences and ill effects which the world feels from the licentiouſneſs of this practice, are not ſufficiently counterbalanced by the real influence it has upon men's lives and conduct?—That if there was no evil-ſpeaking in the world, thouſands would be encouraged to do ill,—and would ruſh into many indecorums, like a horſe into the battle, were they ſure to eſcape the tongues of men.

That if we take a general view of the world,—we ſhall find that a great deal of virtue,—at leaſt of the outward appearance of it,—is not ſo much from any fixed principle, as the terror of what the world will ſay,—and the liberty it will take upon the occaſions we ſhall give.

That, if we deſcend to particulars, numbers are every day taking more pains to be well ſpoken of,—than what would actually enable them to live ſo as to deſerve it.

That there are many of both ſexes who can ſupport life well enough without honour and chaſtity,—who, without reputation (which

is but the opinion which the world has of the matter) would hide their heads in ſhame, and ſink down in utter deſpair of happineſs.—No doubt the tongue is a weapon which does chaſtiſe many indecorums, which the laws of men will not reach;—and keeps many in awe,—whom conſcience will not;—and where the caſe is indiſputably flagrant,—the ſpeaking of it in ſuch words as it deſerves,—ſcarce comes within the prohibition.—In many caſes, 'tis hard to expreſs ourſelves ſo as to fix a diſtinction betwixt oppoſite characters;—and ſometimes it may be as much a debt we owe to virtue, and as great a piece of juſtice to expoſe a vicious character, and paint it in its proper colours,—as it is to ſpeak well of the deſerving, and deſcribe his particular virtues.—And, indeed, when we inflict this puniſhment upon the bad, merely out of principle, and without indulgence to any private paſſion of our own,—'tis a caſe which happens ſo ſeldom, that one might venture to except it.

However, to thoſe who in this objection are really concerned for the cauſe of virtue, I cannot help recommending what would much more effectually ſerve her intereſt, and be a ſurer token of their zeal and attachment to her; and that is,—in all ſuch plain inſtances where it ſeems to be duty, to fix a diſtinction betwixt the good and the bad;—to let their actions ſpeak it inſtead of their words, or at leaſt to let them both

both ſpeak one language. We all of us talk ſo loud againſt vicious characters, and are ſo unanimous in our cry againſt them,—that an unexperienced man, who only truſted his ears, would imagine the whole world was in an uproar about it,—and that mankind were all aſſociating together, to hunt vice utterly out of the world.—Shift the ſcene,—and let him behold the reception which vice meets with;—he will ſee the conduct and behaviour of the world towards it, ſo oppoſite to their declarations:—he will find all he heard, ſo contradicted by what he ſaw,—as to leave him in doubt which of his ſenſes he is to truſt,—or in which of the two caſes mankind were really in earneſt. Was there virtue enough in the world to make a general ſtand againſt this contradiction;—that is,—was every one who deſerved to be ill ſpoken of,—ſure to be ill looked on too;—was it a certain conſequence of the loſs of a man's character,—to loſe his friends,—to loſe the advantages of his birth and fortune,—and thenceforth be univerſally ſhunned, univerſally ſlighted;—

Was no quality a ſhelter againſt the indecorums of the other ſex, but was every woman without diſtinction who had juſtly forfeited her reputation,—from that moment was ſhe ſure to forfeit likewiſe all claim to civility and reſpect;—

Or, in a word, could it be eſtabliſhed as a law in our ceremonial,—that wherever characters

characters in either ſex were become notorious,—it ſhould be deemed infamous, either to pay or receive a viſit from them, and the door were to be ſhut againſt them in all public places, till they had ſatisfied the world by giving teſtimony of a better life,—a few ſuch plain and honeſt maxims faithfully put in practice,—would force us upon ſome degree of reformation. Till this is done,—it avails little that we have no mercy upon them with our tongues, ſince they eſcape without feeling any other inconvenience.

We all cry out that the world is corrupt;—and I fear too juſtly:—but we never reflect what we have to thank for it, and that our open countenance of vice, which gives the lie to our private cenſures of it, is its chief protection and encouragement.—To thoſe however who ſtill believe that evil-ſpeaking is ſome terror to evil-doers, one may anſwer, as a great man has done upon the occaſion,—That after all our exhortations againſt it,—'tis not to be feared, but that there will be evil-ſpeaking enough left in the world to chaſtiſe the guilty;—and we may ſafely truſt them to an ill-natured world, that there will be no failure of juſtice upon this ſcore.—The paſſions of men are pretty ſevere executioners; and, to them let us leave this ungrateful taſk,—and rather ourſelves endeavour to cultivate that more friendly one, recommended by the apoſtle,—of letting all bitterneſs, and wrath,

wrath, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking, be put away from us;—of being kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, forgave us. Amen.

SERMON XII.

JOSEPH'S HISTORY CONSIDERED.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES

GENESIS L. 15.

And when Joſeph's brethren ſaw that their father was dead, they ſaid, Joſeph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evils which we did unto him.

THERE are few inſtances of the exerciſe of particular virtues which ſeem harder to attain to, or which appear more amiable and engaging in themſelves, than thoſe of moderation and the forgiveneſs of injuries; and, when the temptations againſt them happen to be heightened by the bitterneſs of a provocation on one hand, and the fairneſs of an opportunity to retaliate on the other, the inſtances *then* are truly great and heroic. The words of the text (which are the conſultation of the ſons of Jacob amongſt themſelves upon their father Iſrael's death, when, becauſe it was in Joſeph's power to revenge the deadly injury they had formerly done him, they concluded, in courſe, that it was in his intention) —will lead us to a beautiful example of this kind in the character and behaviour of Joſeph conſequent thereupon; and, as it ſeems a perfect and very engaging pattern of forbearance, it may not be improper to make it

ſerve for the ground-work of a diſcourſe upon that ſubject.——The whole tranſaction, from the firſt occaſion given by Joſeph in his youth, to this laſt act of remiſſion, at the concluſion of his life, may be ſaid to be a maſter-piece of hiſtory. There is not only in the manner throughout, ſuch a happy, though uncommon, mixture of ſimplicity and grandeur, which is a double character, ſo hard to be united that it is ſeldom to be met with in compoſitions merely human;—but it is likewiſe related with the greateſt variety of tender and affecting circumſtances, which would afford matter for reflections uſeful for the conduct of almoſt every part and ſtage of a man's life.—But as the words of the text, as well as the intention and compaſs of this diſcourſe, particularly confine me to ſpeak only to one point, namely, the forgiveneſs of injuries, it will be proper only to conſider ſuch circumſtances of the ſtory as will place this inſtance of it in its juſt light, and then proceed to make a more general uſe of the great example of moderation and forbearance which it ſets before us.

It ſeems ſtrange, at firſt ſight, that, after the ſons of Jacob had fallen into Joſeph's power, when they were forced by the foreneſs of the famine to go down into Egypt to buy corn, and had found him too good a man even to expoſtulate with them for an injury, which he ſeemed then to have digeſted, and piouſly to have reſolved into the over-ruling providence of God, for the preſervation of much

much people, how they could ever after queſtion the uprightneſs of his intentions, or entertain the leaſt ſuſpicion that his reconciliation was diſſembled. Would one have imagined, that the man who had diſcovered ſuch a goodneſs of ſoul, that he ſought where to weep, becauſe he could not bear the ſtruggles of a counterfeited harſhneſs, could ever be ſuſpected afterwards of intending a real one?—and that he only waited till their father Iſrael's death, to requite them all the evil which they had done unto him? What ſtill adds to this difficulty is, that his affectionate manner in making himſelf known to them,—his goodneſs in forbearing not only to reproach them for the injury they had formerly done him, but extenuating and excuſing the fault to themſelves, his comforting and ſpeaking kindly to them, and ſeconding all with the tendereſt marks of an undiſguiſed forgiveneſs, in falling upon their necks and weeping aloud, that all the houſe of Pharaoh heard him;—that, moreover, this behaviour of Joſeph could not appear to them to be the effect of any warm and ſudden tranſport, which might as ſuddenly give way to other reflections, but that it evidently ſprung from a ſettled principle of uncommon generoſity in his nature, which was above the temptation of making uſe of an opportunity for revenge, which the courſe of God's providence had put into his hands for better purpoſes; and, what might ſtill ſeem to confirm this, was the evidence of his actions to them afterwards,

wards, in bringing them and all their houſehold up out of Canaan, and placing them near him in the land of Goſhen, the richeſt part of Egypt, where they had had ſo many years experience of his love and kindneſs:—and yet it is plain all this did not clear his motive from ſuſpicion, or, at leaſt, themſelves of ſome apprehenſions of a change in his conduct towards them. And was it not that the whole tranſaction was written under the direction of the Spirit of Truth, and that other hiſtorians concur in doing juſtice to Joſeph's character, and ſpeak of him as a compaſſionate and merciful man, one would be apt, you will ſay, to imagine here, that Moſes might poſſibly have omitted ſome circumſtances of Joſeph's behaviour which had alarmed his brethren, betwixt the time of his firſt reconciliation and that of their father's death:—for they could not be ſuſpicious of his intentions without ſome cauſe, and feat where no fear was;—But does not a guilty conſcience often do ſo,—and, though it has the grounds, yet wants the power to think itſelf ſafe?

And could we look into the hearts of thoſe who know they deſerve ill, we ſhould find many an inſtance, where a kindneſs from an injured hand where there was leaſt reaſon to expect one, has ſtruck deeper, and touched the heart with a degree of remorſe and concern, which, perhaps, no ſeverity or reſentment could have reached. This reflection will, in ſome meaſure, help to explain this difficulty,

difficulty, which occurs in the ſtory; for it is obſervable, that, when the injury they had done their brother was firſt committed, and the fact was freſh upon their minds, and moſt likely to have filled them with a ſenſe of guilt, we find no acknowledgment or complaint to one another of ſuch a load as, one might imagine, it had laid upon them: and from that event, through a long courſe of years, to the time they had gone down to Egypt, we read not once of any ſorrow, or compunction of heart, which they had felt during all that time, for what they had done. They had artfully impoſed upon their parent —(and as men are ingenious caſuiſts in their own affairs) they had, probably, as artfully impoſed upon their own conſciences;—and, poſſibly, had never impartially reflected upon the action, or conſidered it in its juſt light, till the many acts of their brother's love and kindneſs had brought it before them, with all the circumſtances of aggravation which his behaviour would naturally give it:—they then began maturely to conſider what they had done;—that they had firſt undeſervedly hated him in his childhood for that which, if it was a ground of complaint, ought rather to have been charged upon the indiſcretion of the parent, than conſidered as a fault in him; —that, upon a more juſt examination and a better knowledge of their brother, they had wanted even that pretence. It was not a blind partiality which ſeemed firſt to have directed their father's affection to him,—though

then

then they thought ſo;—for doubtleſs, ſo much goodneſs and benevolence as ſhone forth in his nature, now that he was a man, could not lie all of it ſo deep concealed in his youth, but the ſagacity of a parent's eye would diſcover it; and that, in courſe, their enmity towards him was founded upon that which ought to have won their eſteem.—That, if he had incautiouſly added envy to their ill-will in reporting his dreams, which preſaged his future greatneſs, it was but the indiſcretion of a youth unpractiſed in the world, who had not yet found out the art of diſſembling his hopes and expectations; and was ſcarce arrived at an age to comprehend there was ſuch a thing in the world as envy and ambition;—that if ſuch offences in a brother, ſo fairly carried their own excuſes with them, what could they ſay for themſelves, when they conſidered it was for this they had almoſt unanimouſly conſpired to rob him of his life; and, though they were happily reſtrained from ſhedding his blood upon Reuben's remonſtrance, that they had, nevertheleſs, all the guilt of the intention to anſwer for? That whatever motive it was which then ſtayed their hands, their conſciences told them it could not be a good one, ſince they had changed the ſentence for one no leſs cruel in itſelf, and what, to an ingenuous nature, was worſe than death, to be ſold for a ſlave.—The one was common to all, the other only to the unfortunate. That it was not compaſſion which then took place; for,

had there been any way open to that, his tears and entreaties muſt have found it, when they ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul;—when he beſought, and they would not hear.—That if aught ſtill could heighten the remorſe of baniſhing a youth without provocation, for ever from his country and the protection of his parent, to be expoſed naked to the buffetings of the world, and the rough hand of ſome mercileſs maſter, they would find it in this reflection, 'That the many afflictions and 'hardſhips, which they might naturally have 'expected would overtake the lad, conſequent 'upon this action, had actually fallen upon 'him.'

That, beſides the anguiſh of ſuſpected virtue, he had felt that of a priſon, where he had long lain neglected in a friendleſs condition; and, where the affliction of it was rendered ſtill ſharper by the daily expectation of being remembered by Pharaoh's chief butler, and the diſappointment of finding himſelf ungratefully forgotten.—And though Moſes tells us, that he found favour in the ſight of the keeper of the priſon, yet the Pſalmiſt acquaints us that his ſufferings were ſtill grievous, "That his feet were hurt with "fetters," and the iron entered "even into "his ſoul." And, no doubt, his brethren thought the ſenſe of their injury muſt have entered at the ſame time, and was then rivetted and fixed in his mind for ever.

It is natural to imagine they argued and reflected in this manner; and there ſeems no neceſſity

neceſſity of ſeeking for the reaſon of their uneaſineſs and diſtruſt in Joſeph's conduct, or any other external cauſe, ſince the inward workings of their own minds will eaſily account for the evil they apprehended.—A ſeries of benefits and kindneſſes from the man they had injured, gradually heightened the idea of their own guilt, till at length they could not conceive how the treſpaſs could be forgiven them; it appeared with ſuch freſh circumſtances of aggravation, that, though they were convinced his reſentment ſlept, yet they thought it only ſlept, and was likely ſome time or other to awake, and moſt probably then, that their father was dead, when the conſideration of involving him in his revenge had ceaſed, and all the duty and compaſſion he owed to the grey hairs and happineſs of a parent was diſcharged and buried with him.

This they expreſs in the conſultation held amongſt themſelves in the words of the text; and, in the following verſe, we find them accordingly ſending to him to deprecate the evil they dreaded; and either becauſe they thought their father's name more powerful than their own in this application,—or, rather, that they might not commit a freſh injury in ſeeming to ſuſpect his ſincerity, they pretend their father's direction; for we read they ſent meſſengers unto Joſeph, ſaying, Thy father did command before he died, ſaying,—So ſhall ye ſay unto Joſeph,—"Forgive, I pray thee now, the "treſpaſs of thy brethren and their ſin; for "they did unto thee evil: and now we pray

" thee, forgive the treſpaſs of the ſervants of " the God of thy father." The addreſs was not without art, and was conceived in ſuch words as ſeemed to ſuggeſt an argument in their favour,—as if it would not become him, who was but a fellow-ſervant of their father's God, to harbour revenge, or uſe the power their father's God had given him againſt his children. Nor was there a reaſon in any thing but the fears of a guilty conſcience to apprehend it, as appears from the reception the addreſs met with, which was ſuch as beſpoke an uncommon goodneſs of nature; for when they thus ſpake unto him, the hiſtorian ſays he wept. Sympathy for the ſorrow and diſtreſs of ſo many ſons of his father, now all in his power,—pain at ſo open and ingenuous a confeſſion of their guilt,—concern and pity for the long puniſhment they muſt have endured by ſo ſtubborn a remorſe, which ſo many years ſeemed not to have diminiſhed,—the affecting idea of their condition, which had ſeemed to reduce them to the neceſſity of holding up their hands for mercy, when they had loſt their protector,—ſo many tender paſſions ſtruggling together at once, overcame him;—he burſt into tears; which ſpoke what no language could attempt. It will be needleſs, therefore, to enlarge any further upon this incident, which furniſhes us with ſo beautiful a picture of a compaſſionate and forgiving temper, that, I think, no words can heighten it;—but, rather, let us endeavour to find out by what helps and reaſoning the patriarch might be

be ſuppoſed to attain to ſo exalted and engaging a virtue. Perhaps you will ſay, 'That 'one ſo thoroughly convinced, as Joſeph 'ſeemed to be, of the over-ruling providence 'of God, which ſo evidently makes uſe of the 'malice and paſſions of men, and turns them 'as inſtruments in his hands to work his own 'righteouſneſs, and bring about his eternal de-'crees,—and of which his own hiſtory was ſo 'plain an inſtance, could not have far to ſeek 'for an argument to forgiveneſs, or feel much 'ſtruggle in ſtifling an inclination againſt it.' —But let any man lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, how often, in inſtances where anger and revenge had ſeized him, has this doctrine come in to his aid?—In the bitterneſs of an affront, how often has it calmed his paſſions, and checked the fury of his reſentment!—True, and univerſally believed as the doctrine is amongſt us, it ſeldom does this ſervice, though ſo well ſuited for it, and, like ſome wiſe ſtatute, never executed or thought of, though in full force, lies as unheeded as if it was not in being.

'Tis plain 'twas otherwiſe in the preſent inſtance, where Joſeph ſeems to acknowledge the influence it had upon him in his declaration,—'*That* it was not they, but God who 'ſent him.' And does not this virtue ſhine the brighteſt in ſuch a pious application of the perſuaſion to ſo benevolent a purpoſe?

Without derogating from the merit of his forbearance, he might be ſuppoſed to have caſt an eye upon the change and uncertainty

of human affairs which he had ſeen himſelf, and which had convinced him we were all in one another's power by turns, and ſtand in need of one another's pity and compaſſion;—and that to reſtrain the cruelties and ſtop the inſolence of men's reſentments, God has ſo ordered it in the courſe of his providence, that very often in this world,—our revenges return upon our own heads, and men's violent dealings upon their own pates.

And, beſides theſe conſiderations,—that, in generouſly forgiving an enemy, he was the trueſt friend to his own character, and ſhould gain more to it by ſuch an inſtance of ſubduing his ſpirit, than if he had taken a city.—The brave only know how to forgive!—it is the moſt refined and generous pitch of virtue human nature can arrive at.—* Cowards have done good and kind actions;—cowards have even fought,—nay, ſometimes even conquered;—but a coward never forgave!—It is not in his nature;—the power of doing it flows only from a ſtrength and greatneſs of ſoul, conſcious of its own force and ſecurity, and above the little temptations of reſenting every fruitleſs attempt to interrupt its happineſs. Moreover, ſetting aſide all conſiderations of his character in paſſing by an injury, he was the trueſt friend likewiſe to his own happineſs and peace of mind; he never felt that fretful ſtorm of paſſions which hurry men on to acts of revenge,—or ſuffered thoſe

* Chriſtian Hero.

pangs

pangs of horror which purſue it. Thus he might poſſibly argue, and no farther;—for want of a better foundation and better helps, he could raiſe the building no higher;—to carry it upwards to its perfection, we muſt call in to our aid that more ſpiritual and refined doctrine introduced upon it by Chriſt; namely,—To forgive a brother not only to ſeven times, but to ſeventy times ſeven;—that is, without limitation.

In this the excellency of the goſpel is ſaid, by ſome one, to appear with a remarkable advantage; 'That a Chriſtian is as much diſ-'poſed to love and ſerve you when your 'enemy, as the mere moral man can be, when 'he is your friend.'—This, no doubt, is the tendency of his religion;—but how often, or in what degrees it ſucceeds,—how nearly the practice keeps pace with the theory, the all-wiſe Searcher into the hearts of men, alone is able to determine. But it is to be feared, that ſuch great effects are not ſo ſenſibly felt as a ſpeculative man would expect from ſuch powerful motives; and their is many a chriſtian ſociety which would be glad to compound amongſt themſelves for ſome leſſer degrees of perfection on one hand, were they ſure to be exempted on the other, from the bad effects of thoſe fretful paſſions which are ever taking, as well as ever giving the occaſions of ſtrife; the beginnings of which Solomon aptly compares to the letting out of waters,—the opening a breach which no one can be ſure to ſtop till it has proceeded to the moſt fatal events.

With juſtice, therefore, might the ſon of Sirach conclude, concerning Pride,—that ſecret ſtream which adminiſters to the overflowings of reſentments,—that it was not made for man; nor furious anger for him that is born of a woman. That the one did not become his ſtation;—and that the other was deſtructive to all the happineſs he was intended to receive from it. How miſerably then muſt thoſe men turn tyrants againſt themſelves, as well as others, who grow ſplenetic and revengeful, not only upon the little unavoidable oppoſitions and offences they muſt meet with in the commerce of the world, but upon thoſe which only reach them by report, and accordingly torment their little ſouls with meditating how to return the injury, before they are certain they have received one!—Whether this eager ſenſibility of wrongs and reſentment ariſes from that general cauſe to which the ſon of Sirach ſeems to reduce all fierce anger and paſſion? or whether to a certain ſourneſs of temper, which ſtands in every body's way, and therefore ſubject to be often hurt?—from whichever cauſe the diſorder ſprings, the advice of the author of the Book of Eccleſiaſticus is proper:—'Admoniſh a friend,' ſays he, 'it 'may be he hath not done it; and if he have, 'that he do it not again. Admoniſh thy 'friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it; and if 'he have, that he ſpeak it not again. There 'is that ſlippeth in his ſpeech, but not from 'his heart: and who is he who hath not 'offended with his tongue?'

I cannot

I cannot help taking notice here of a certain ſpecies of forgiveneſs, which is ſeldom enforced or thought of, and yet is no way below our regard: I mean the forgiveneſs of thoſe, if we may be allowed the expreſſion, whom we have injured ourſelves. One would think that the difficulty of forgiving could only reſt on the ſide of him who has received the wrong; but the truth of the fact is often otherwiſe. The conſciouſneſs of having provoked another's reſentment often excites the aggreſſor to keep beforehand with the man he has hurt, and not only to hate him for the evil he expects in return, but even to purſue him down, and put it out of his power to make repriſals.

The baſeneſs of this is ſuch, that it is ſufficient to make the ſame obſervation which was made upon the crime of parricide among the Grecians: — It was ſo black, — their legiſlators did not ſuppoſe it could be committed; and, therefore, made no law to puniſh it.

SERMON XIII.

DUTY OF SETTING BOUNDS TO OUR DESIRES.

2 KINGS IV. 13.

And he ſaid unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou haſt been careful for us with all this care;—what is to be done for thee?—wouldſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or the captain of the hoſt?—And ſhe anſwered, I dwell among mine own people.

THE firſt part of the text is the words which the prophet Eliſha puts into the mouth of his ſervant Gehazi, as a meſſage of thanks to the woman of Shunem for her great kindneſs and hoſpitality; of which, after the acknowledgment of his juſt ſenſe, which Gehazi is bid to deliver in the words,—"Behold, thou "haſt been careful for us with all this care,"—he directs him to enquire in what manner he may beſt make a return in diſcharge of the obligation,—"What ſhall be done for thee? "Wouldſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or "the captain of the hoſt?"—The laſt part of the text is the Shunamite's anſwer, which implies a refuſal of the honour or advantage which the prophet intended to bring upon her by ſuch an application, which ſhe indirectly expreſſes in her contentment and ſatisfaction with what ſhe enjoyed in her preſent ſtation,—"I dwell among mine own "people." This inſtance of ſelf-denial in the

the Shunamite, is but properly the introduction to her ſtory, and gives riſe to that long and very pathetic tranſaction which follows,—in the ſupernatural grant of a child, which God had many years denied her; the affecting loſs of him as ſoon as he was grown up,—and his reſtoration to life by Eliſha, after he had been ſome time dead; the whole of which, though extremely intereſting, and forming ſuch incidents as would afford ſufficient matter for inſtruction, yet, as it will not fall within the intention of this diſcourſe, I ſhall beg leave at this time barely to conſider thoſe previous circumſtances of it, to which the text confines me; upon which I ſhall enlarge with ſuch reflections as occur, and then proceed to that practical uſe and exhortation which will naturally fall from it.

We find that, after Eliſha had reſcued the diſtreſſed widow and her two ſons from the hands of the creditor, by the miraculous multiplication of her oil,—that he paſſed on to Shunem, where, we read, was a great woman, and ſhe conſtrained him to eat bread; and ſo it was that, as often as he paſſed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. The ſacred hiſtorian ſpeaks barely of her temporal condition and ſtation in life,—"That ſhe was a great "woman," but deſcribes not the more material part of her (her virtues and character) becauſe they were more evidently to be diſcovered from the tranſaction itſelf; from which it appears, that ſhe was not only wealthy,

wealthy, but likewiſe charitable, and of a very conſiderate turn of mind;—for after many repeated invitations and entertainments at her houſe, finding his occaſions called him to a frequent paſſage that way,—ſhe moves her huſband to ſet up and furniſh a lodging for him, with all the conveniences which the ſimplicity of thoſe times required: "And ſhe ſaid unto her huſband, Behold, "now I perceive that this is an holy man "of God, which paſſeth by us continually, "let us make him a little chamber, I pray "thee, on the wall, and let us ſet for him "there a bed, and a table, and a ſtool, and a "candleſtick; and it ſhall be when he cometh "to us, that he ſhall turn in thither."—She perceived he was a holy man;—ſhe had many opportunities, as he paſſed by them continually, of obſerving his behaviour and deportment, which ſhe had carefully remarked, and ſaw plainly what he was:—that the ſanctity and ſimplicity of his manners,—the ſeverity of his life,—his zeal for the religion of his God, and the uncommon fervency of his devotion, when he worſhipped before him, which ſeemed his whole buſineſs and employment upon earth,—all beſpoke him not a man of this world, but one whoſe heart and affections were fixed upon another object, which was dearer and more important to him. But as ſuch outward appearances may, and often have been counterfeited, ſo that the actions of a man are certainly the only interpreters to be relied on, whether ſuch

ſuch colours are true or falſe,—ſo ſhe had heard that all was of a piece there, and that he was throughout conſiſtent; that he had never in any one inſtance of his life acted as if he had any views in the affairs of this world, in which he had never intereſted himſelf at all, but where the glory of his God, or the good and preſervation of his fellow-creatures, at firſt inclined him: that, in a late inſtance, before he came to Shunem, he had done one of the kindeſt and moſt charitable actions that a good man could have done, in aſſiſting the widow and fatherleſs; and, as the fact was ſingular, and had juſt happened before her knowledge of him, no doubt ſhe had heard the ſtory with all the tender circumſtances which a true report would give it in his favour, namely, that a certain woman, whoſe huſband was lately dead, and had left her with her children in a very helpleſs condition,—very deſtitute,—and, what was ſtill worſe, charged with a debt ſhe was not able to pay;—that her creditor bore exceeding hard upon her, and, finding her little worth in ſubſtance, was going to take the advantage which the law allowed of ſeizing her two ſons for his bondſmen; ſo that ſhe had not only loſt her huſband, which had made her miſerable enough already, but was going to be bereaved of her children, who were the only comfort and ſupport of her life:—that upon her coming to Eliſha with this ſad ſtory, he was touched with compaſſion for her misfortunes, and had

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uſed all the power and intereſt which he had with his God to relieve and befriend her, which, in an unheard-of manner, by the miraculous increaſe of her oil, which was the only ſubſtance ſhe had left, he had ſo bountifully effected, as not only to diſentangle her from her difficulties in paying the debt, but withal, what was ſtill more generous, to enable her to live comfortably the remainder of her days. She conſidered that charity and compaſſion was ſo leading a virtue, and had ſuch an influence upon every other part of a man's character, as to be a ſufficient proof by itſelf of the inward diſpoſition and goodneſs of the heart; but that ſo engaging an inſtance of it as this, exerciſed in ſo kind and ſo ſeaſonable a manner, was a demonſtration of his,—and that he was in truth what outward circumſtances beſpoke, a holy man of God.——As the Shunamite's principle and motive for her hoſpitality to Eliſha was juſt, as it ſprung from an idea of the worth and merit of her gueſt, ſo likewiſe was the manner of doing it kind and conſiderate. It is obſervable, ſhe does not ſolicit her huſband to aſſign him an apartment in her own houſe,—but to build him a chamber on the wall, apart; —ſhe conſidered,—that true piety wanted no witneſſes, and was always moſt at eaſe when moſt private;—that the tumult and diſtraction of a large family were not fit for the ſilent meditations of ſo holy a man, who would perpetually there meet with ſome-

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thing either to interrupt his devotion, or offend the purity of his manners:—that, moreover, under ſuch an independent roof, where he could take ſhelter as often as his occaſions required, ſhe thought he might taſte the pleaſure which was natural to man in poſſeſſing ſomething like what he could call his own,—and, what is no ſmall part of conferring a favour, he would ſcarce feel the weight of it, or at leaſt much ſeldomer in this manner than where a daily invitation and repetition of the kindneſs perpetually put him in mind of his obligation. If any thing could ſtill add to this,—it was that it did not appear to be the dry offer of a faint civility, but that it came directly from the heart. There is a nicety in honeſt minds, which will not accept of a cold and ſuſpected offer;—and even when it appears to be ſincere and truly meant, there is a modeſty in true merit which knows not how to accept it; and no doubt ſhe had one, if not both theſe difficulties to conquer in their turns;—for we read that ſhe conſtrained him, and in all likelihood forced his acceptance of it, with all the warmth and friendly openneſs of a humane and hoſpitable temper.

It is with benefits as with injuries in this reſpect, that we do not ſo much weigh the accidental good or evil they do us, as that which they were deſigned to do us;—that is, we conſider no part of them ſo much as their intention: and the prophet's behaviour

conſequent upon this, ſhews he beheld it through this medium, or in ſome ſuch advantageous light as I have placed it.

There is no burthen ſo heavy to a grateful mind, as a debt of kindneſs unpaid;—and we may believe Eliſha felt it ſo, from the earneſt deſire which he had, upon the immediate receipt of this, to diſcharge himſelf of it; which he expreſſes in the text in the warmeſt manner:—"Behold, thou haſt been careful for us, with all this care,—what ſhall be done for thee? Wouldſt thou be ſpoken for to the king, or the captain of the hoſt?"—There is a degree of honeſt impatience in the words, ſuch as was natural to a good man, who would not be behind-hand with his benefactor.—But there is one thing which may ſeem ſtrange at firſt ſight, that as her ſtation and condition of life was ſuch, that ſhe appeared rather to have abounded already, than ſtood in want of any thing in this world which ſuch an application could ſupply,—why the prophet ſhould not rather have propoſed ſome ſpiritual advantage, which, as it would better have become the ſanctity of his character on the one hand, ſo, on the other, it would have done a more real and laſting ſervice to his friend.

But we are to reflect, that, in returning favours, we act differently from what we do in conferring them;—in the one caſe we ſimply conſider what is beſt;—in the other, what is moſt acceptable. The reaſon is, that

we have a right to act according to our own ideas of what will do the party moſt good, in the caſe where we beſtow a favour;—but where we return one, we looſe this right, and act according to his conceptions who has obliged us, and endeavour to repay in ſuch a manner as we think it moſt likely to be accepted in diſcharge of the obligation.—So that, though we are not to imagine Eliſha could be wanting in religious duties, as well as wiſhes, to ſo hoſpitable a friend, we may yet ſuppoſe he was directed here by this principle of equity;—and that in reflecting in what manner he ſhould requite his benefactreſs, he had conſidered, that to one of her affluent condition, who had all the reaſonable comforts of an independent life, —if there was any paſſion yet unſatisfied, it muſt certainly be ambition: that though in general it was an irregular appetite, which, in moſt caſes, 'twas dangerous to gratify, yet in effect 'twas only ſo far criminal as the power which is acquired was perverted to bad and vicious purpoſes, which it was not likely to be here, from the ſpecimen ſhe had already given of her diſpoſition, which ſhewed that if ſhe did wiſh for an increaſe of wealth or honour, ſhe wiſhed it only as it would enable her more generouſly to extend her arm in kind offices, and increaſe the power as well as the opportunities of doing good.

In juſtice to Eliſha's motive, which muſt have been good, we muſt ſuppoſe he conſidered his offer in this light; and what princi-

pally led him to propoſe it, was the great intereſt which he had with the king of Iſrael at that time, which he had merited by a ſignal ſervice; and as he had no views for himſelf, he thought it could not be employed ſo well as in eſtabliſhing the fortune of one, whoſe virtue might be ſo ſafely truſted with it. It was a juſtifiable prepoſſeſſion in her favour,—though one not always to be relied on; for there is many a one who in a moderate ſtation, and with a leſſer degree of power, has behaved with honour and unblemiſhed reputation; and who has even borne the buffetings of adverſe fortune well, and manifeſted great preſence and ſtrength of mind under it, whom nevertheleſs a high exaltation has at once overcome, and ſo entirely changed, as if the party had left not only his virtue, but even himſelf behind him.

Whether the Shunamite dreaded to make this dangerous experiment of herſelf;—or, which is more likely, that ſhe had learned to ſet bounds to her deſires, and was too well ſatisfied with her preſent condition to be tempted out of it, ſhe declines the offer in the cloſe of the text:—"I dwell amongſt mine "own people;" as if ſhe had ſaid, 'The in-'tended kindneſs is far from being ſmall, 'but it is not uſeful to me; I live here, as 'thou art a witneſs, in peace, in a contented 'obſcurity;—not ſo high as to provoke envy, 'nor ſo low as to be trodden down and de-'ſpiſed. In this ſafe and middle ſtate, as I 'have lived amongſt my own people, ſo let me

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'die out of the reach both of the cares and 'glories of the world.—'Tis fit, O holy man 'of God! that I learn ſome time or other to 'ſet bounds to my deſires; and if I cannot 'fix them now, when I have already more 'than my wants require, when ſhall I hope 'to do it?—Or how ſhould I expect, that 'even this increaſe of honour or fortune 'would fully ſatisfy and content my ambi-'tion, ſhould I now give way to it?'

So engaging an inſtance of unaffected moderation and ſelf-denial, deſerves well to be conſidered by the buſtlers in this world;—becauſe, if we are to truſt the face and courſe of things, we ſcarce ſee any virtue ſo hard to be put in practice, and which the generality of mankind ſeem ſo unwilling to learn, as this of knowing when they have enough, and when it is time to give over their worldly purſuits.—Aye! but nothing is more eaſy, you will anſwer, than to fix this point, and ſet certain bounds to it.—"For my own part (you will ſay) I declare I want, and would wiſh no more but a ſufficient competency of thoſe things which are requiſite to the real uſes and occaſions of life, ſuitable to the way I have been taught to expect from uſe and education."—But recollect how ſeldom it ever happens, when theſe points are ſecured, but that new occaſions and new neceſſities preſent themſelves; and every day as you grow richer, freſh wants are diſcovered, which riſe up before you as you aſcend the hill; ſo that every ſtep you take,—every acceſſion to

your fortune, ſet your deſires one degree farther from reſt and ſatisfaction;—that ſomething you have not yet graſped, and poſſibly never ſhall; that devil of a phantom, unpoſſeſſed and unpoſſeſſable, is perpetually haunting you, and ſtepping in betwixt you and your contentment.—Unhappy creature!—to think of enjoying that bleſſing without moderation!—or imagine that ſo ſacred a temple can be raiſed upon the foundation of wealth or power!—If the ground work is not laid within your own mind, they will as ſoon add a cubit to your ſtature as to your happineſs.—To be convinced it is ſo,—pray look up to thoſe who have got as high as their warmeſt wiſhes could carry them in this aſcent:—do you obſerve they live the better, the longer, the merrier?—or that they ſleep the ſounder in their beds, for having twice as much as they wanted, or well know how to diſpoſe of?—Of all rules for calculating happineſs, this is the moſt deceitful, and which few but weak minds, and thoſe unpractiſed in the world too, ever think of applying as the meaſure in ſuch an eſtimation.—Great and inexpreſſible may be the happineſs which a moderate fortune and moderate deſires, with a conſciouſneſs of virtue, will ſecure. Many are the ſilent pleaſures of the honeſt peaſant, who riſes cheerful to his labour:—why ſhould they not?—Look into his houſe, the ſeat of each man's happineſs;—has he not the ſame domeſtic endearments,—the ſame joy and comfort in his children, and as flattering hopes

hopes of their doing well, to enliven his hours and gladden his heart, as you could conceive in the higheſt ſtation?—And I make no doubt, in general, but if the true ſtate of his joys and ſufferings could be fairly balanced with thoſe of his betters, whether any thing would appear at the foot of the account but what would recommend the moral of this diſcourſe.—This, I own, is not to be attained to by the cynical ſtale trick of haranguing againſt the goods of fortune;—they were never intended to be talked out of the world.—But as virtue and true wiſdom lie in the middle of extremes,—on one hand, not to neglect and deſpiſe riches ſo as to forget ourſelves; and, on the other, not to purſue and love them ſo as to forget God;—to have them ſometimes in our heads,—but always, ſomething more important in our hearts.

SERMON XIV.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

ISAIAH I. 3.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib;—but Iſrael doth not know,—my people doth not conſider.

'TIS a ſevere but an affectionate reproach of the prophet's, laid againſt the Iſraelites, which may ſafely be applied to every heedleſs and unthankful people, who are neither won by God's mercies, nor terrified by his puniſhments.—There is a giddy, thoughtleſs, intemperate ſpirit gone forth into the world, which poſſeſſes the generality of mankind;—and the reaſon the world is undone is, becauſe the world does not conſider,—conſiders neither awful regard to God,—nor the true relation themſelves bear to him. Could they conſider this, and learn to weigh the cauſes, and compare the conſequences of things, and to exerciſe the reaſon which God has put into us for the government and direction of our lives,—there would be ſome hopes of a reformation.—But, as the world goes, there is no leiſure for ſuch enquiries; and ſo full are our minds of other matters, that we have not time to aſk, nor a heart to anſwer the queſtions we ought to put to ourſelves.

Whatever our condition is, 'tis good to be acquainted with it in time, to be able to ſup-

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ply what is wanting,—and examine the ſtate of our accounts before we come to give them up to an impartial Judge.

The moſt inconſiderate ſee the reaſonableneſs of this,—there being few, I believe, either ſo thoughtleſs,—or even ſo bad,—but that they ſometimes enter upon this duty, and have ſome ſhort intervals of ſelf-examination, which they are forced upon if from no other motive, yet at leaſt to free themſelves from the load and oppreſſion of ſpirits they muſt neceſſarily be ſubject to without it.—But as the Scripture frequently intimates,—and obſervation confirms it daily,—that there are many miſtakes attending the diſcharge of this duty,—I cannot make the remainder of this diſcourſe more uſeful, than by a ſhort enquiry into them. I ſhall therefore, firſt, beg leave to remind you of ſome of the many unhappy ways by which we often ſet about this irkſome taſk of examining our works, without being either the better or the wiſer for the employment.

And, firſt, then let us begin with that which is the foundation of all the other falſe meaſures we take in this matter;—that is, the ſetting about the examination of our works, before we are prepared with honeſt diſpoſitions to amend them:—this is beginning the work at the wrong end. Theſe previous diſpoſitions in the heart, are the wheels that ſhould make this work go eaſily and ſucceſsfully forwards;—and to take them off, and proceed without them, 'tis no miracle, if, like

Pharaoh's chariots, they that drive them,—drive them heavily along.

Beſides, if a man is not ſincerely inclined to reform his faults,—'tis not likely he ſhould be inclined to ſee them;—nor will all the Weekly Preparations that ever were wrote, bring him nearer the point:—ſo that with how ſerious a face ſoever he begins to examine,—he no longer does the office of an enquirer,—but an apologiſt; whoſe buſineſs is not to ſearch for truth,—but ſkilfully to hide it.—So long,—therefore, as this pre-engagement laſts betwixt the man and his old habits,—there is little proſpect of proving his works to any good purpoſe,—of whatever kind they are, with ſo ſtrong an intereſt and power on their ſide.—As in other trials, ſo in this, 'tis no wonder if the evidence is puzzled and confounded, and the ſeveral facts and circumſtances ſo twiſted from their natural ſhapes, and the whole proof ſo altered and confirmed on the other ſide,—as to leave the laſt ſtate of that man even worſe than the firſt.

A ſecond unhappy, though general, miſtake in this great duty of proving our works, is that which the apoſtle hints at; in the doing it, not by a direct examination of our own actions, but from a comparative view of them with the lives and actions of other men.

When a man is going to enter upon this work of ſelf-examination,—there is nothing ſo common as to ſee him look *round* him,—inſtead

inſtead of looking *within* him.—He looks round,—finds out ſome one who is more malicious,—ſees another that is more covetous,—a third that is more proud and imperious than himſelf;—and ſo indirectly forms a judgment of himſelf, not from a review of his life, and a proving of his own works, as the apoſtle directs him, but rather from proving the works of others, and from their infirmities and defects, drawing a deceitful concluſion in favour of himſelf.—In all competitions of this kind,—one may venture to ſay, there will be ever ſo much of ſelf-love in a man, as to draw a flattering likeneſs of one of the parties;—and 'tis well,—if he has not ſo much malignity too, as to give but a coarſe picture of the other,—finiſhed with ſo many hard ſtrokes, as to make the one as unlike its original as the other.

Thus the phariſee, when he entered the temple,—no ſooner ſaw the publican, but that moment he formed the idea to himſelf of all the vices and corruptions that could poſſibly enter into the man's character,—and with great dexterity, ſtated all his own virtues and good qualities over againſt them. His abſtinence and frequent faſtings,—exactneſs in the debts and ceremonies of the law; not balancing the account as he ought to have done, in this manner:—'What! though this man is a publican and a ſinner, have not I my vices as well as he? 'Tis true, his particular office expoſes him to many temptations of committing extortion and injuſtice;—but

—but then,—am not I a devourer of widows houſes, and guilty of one of the moſt cruel inſtances of the ſame crime? He poſſibly is a profane perſon, and may ſet religion at nought:—but do not I myſelf, for a pretence, make long prayers, and bring the greateſt of all ſcandals upon religion, by making it a cloke to my ambitious and worldly views?—If he, laſtly, is debauched and intemperate,—am not I conſcious of as corrupt and wanton diſpoſitions; and that a fair and guarded outſide is my beſt pretence to the oppoſite character?'

If a man will examine his works by a comparative view of them with others,—this, no doubt, would be the fairer, and leaſt likely to miſlead him.—But this is ſeldom the method this trial has gone through;—in fact, it generally turns out to be as treacherous and deluſive to the man himſelf, as it is uncandid to the man who is dragged into the compariſon; and whoever judges of himſelf by this rule,—ſo long as there is no ſcarcity of vicious characters in the world,—'tis to be feared he will often take the occaſions of triumph and rejoicing,—where, in truth, he ought rather to be ſorry and aſhamed.

A third error in the manner of proving our works, is what we are guilty of when we leave out of the calculation the only material parts of them;—I mean, the motives and firſt principles from whence they proceeded. There is many a fair inſtance of

of generoſity, chaſtity, and ſelf-denial, which the world may give a man the credit of;—which, if he would give himſelf the leiſure to reflect upon, and trace back to their firſt ſprings,—he would be conſcious, proceeded from ſuch views and intentions as, if known, would not be to his honour.—The truth of this may be made evident by a thouſand inſtances in life:—and yet there is nothing more uſual than for a man when he is going upon this duty of ſelf-examination,—inſtead of calling his own ways to remembrance,—to cloſe the whole enquiry at once, with this ſhort challenge,—"That he defies the world to ſay ill of him." If the world has no expreſs evidence, this indeed may be an argument of his good luck; but no ſatisfactory one of the real goodneſs and innocence of his life.—A man may be a very bad man,—and yet, through caution,—through deep-laid policy and deſign, may ſo guard all outward appearances, as never to want this negative teſtimony on his ſide,—'That the world knows no evil of him,'—how little ſoever he deſerves it.—Of all aſſays upon a man's ſelf, this may be ſaid to be the ſlighteſt; this method of proving the goodneſs of our works,—differing but little in kind from that unhappy one,—which many unwary people take in proving the goodneſs of their coin;—who, if it happens to be ſuſpicious,—inſtead of bringing it either to the balance or the touchſtone to try its worth,—they ignorantly go forth, and

and try if they can paſs it upon the world:—if ſo, all is well, and they are ſaved all the expence and pains of enquiring after and detecting the cheat.

A fourth error in this duty of examination of mens works is, that of committing the taſk to others:—an error into which thouſands of well-meaning creatures are enſnared in the Romiſh church by her doctrines of auricular confeſſion, of works of ſupererogation, and the many lucrative practices raiſed upon that capital ſtock:—the trade of which is carried to ſuch a height in Popiſh countries, that if you was at Rome or Naples now, and was diſpoſed, in compliance with the apoſtle's exhortation in the text, to ſet about this duty, to prove your *own* works,—'tis great odds whether you would be ſuffered to do it yourſelf, without interruption: and you might be ſaid to have eſcaped well, if the firſt perſon you conſulted upon it did not talk you out of your reſolution, and poſſibly your ſenſes too at the ſame time.—Prove your works!—For Heaven's ſake, deſiſt from ſo raſh an undertaking!—What!—truſt your own ſkill and judgment in a matter of ſo much difficulty and importance,—when there are ſo many whoſe buſineſs it is,—who underſtand it ſo well,—and who can do it for you with ſo much ſafety and advantage!

If your works muſt be proved, you would be adviſed by all means to ſend them to undergo this operation with ſome one who knows

knows what he is about: either ſome expert and noted confeſſor of the church,—or to ſome convent,—or religious ſociety, who are in poſſeſſion of a large ſtock of good works of all kinds, wrought up by ſaints and confeſſors, where you may ſuit yourſelf,—and either get the defects of your own ſupplied, —or be accommodated with new ones ready proved to your hands, ſealed, and certified to be ſo by the Pope's commiſſary and the notaries of his eccleſiaſtic court. There needs little more to lay open this fatal error, —than barely to repreſent it: ſo I ſhall only add a ſhort remark,—That they who are perſuaded to be thus virtuous by proxy, and will prove the goodneſs of their works only by deputies,—will have no reaſon to complain againſt God's juſtice,—if he ſuffers them to go to Heaven only in the ſame manner;—that is,—by deputies too.

The laſt miſtake which I ſhall have time to mention is, that which the Methodiſts have revived; for 'tis no new error,—but one which has miſled thouſands before theſe days, wherever enthuſiaſm had got footing; —and that is,—the attempting to prove their works by that very argument which is the greateſt proof of their weakneſs and ſuperſtition;—I mean that extraordinary impulſe and intercourſe with the Spirit of God which they pretend to, and whoſe operations (if you truſt them) are ſo ſenſibly felt in their hearts and ſouls, as to render at once all other proofs of their works needleſs to themſelves.

ſelves.—This, I own, is one of the moſt ſummary ways of proceeding in this duty of ſelf-examination;—and, as it proves a man's works in the groſs, it ſaves him a world of ſober thought and enquiry after many vexatious particulars.

Indeed, if the premiſes were true,—the inference is direct;—for when a man dreams of theſe inward workings,—and wakes with the impreſſion of them ſtrong upon his brain, 'tis not ſtrange he ſhould think himſelf a choſen veſſel,—ſanctified within, and ſealed up unto the perfect day of redemption; and ſo long as ſuch a one is led captive by this error,—there is nothing in nature to induce him to this duty of examining his own works in the ſenſe of the prophet:—for however bad they are,—ſo long as his credulity and enthuſiaſm equal them, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould diſturb his conſcience, or frighten him into a reformation. Theſe are ſome of the unhappy miſtakes in the many methods this work is ſet about,—which, in a great meaſure, rob us of the fruits we expected,—and ſometimes ſo entirely blaſt them, that we are neither the better nor wiſer for all the pains we have taken.

There are many other falſe ſteps which lead us the ſame way;—but the delineation of theſe, however, may ſerve at preſent, not only as ſo many land-marks to guard us from this dangerous coaſt which I have deſcribed, but to direct us likewiſe into that ſafe one, where we can only expect the re-

ward the Goſpel promiſes;—for if, according to the firſt recited cauſes, a man fails in examining his works, from a diſinclination to reform them,—from partiality of compariſons, from flattery to his own motives, and a vain dependence upon the opinion of the world,—the concluſion is unavoidable, that he muſt ſearch for the qualities the moſt oppoſite to theſe for his conductors;—and if he hopes to diſcharge this work ſo as to have advantage from it,—that he muſt ſet out upon the principles of an honeſt head, willing to reform itſelf, and attached principally to that object, without regard to the ſpiritual condition of others, or the miſguided opinions which the world may have of himſelf.

That for this end,—he muſt call his own ways to remembrance, and ſearch out his ſpirit,—ſearch his actions with the ſame critical exactneſs and ſame piercing curioſity we are wont to ſit in judgment upon others;—varniſhing nothing,—and diſguiſing nothing. If he proceeds thus, and in every relation of life takes a full view of himſelf without prejudice;—traces his actions to their principles without mercy, and looks into the dark corners and receſſes of his heart without fear, and, if upon ſuch an enquiry he acts conſiſtent with his view in it, by reforming his errors, ſeparating the droſs, and purifying the whole maſs with repentance,—this will bid fair for examining a man's works in the apoſtle's ſenſe:—and whoever diſcharges the duty thus, with a view to ſcripture, which is the rule in this

this caſe,—and to reaſon, which is the applier of this rule in all caſes,—need not fear but he will have what the prophet calls "rejoicing in himſelf,"—and that he will lay the foundation of his peace and comfort where it ought to lie;—that is, within himſelf,—in the teſtimony of a good conſcience, and the joyful expectation that, having done his moſt to examine his *own* works here, God will accept them hereafter, through the merits of Chriſt; which God grant! Amen.

SERMON XV.

JOB'S EXPOSTULATION WITH HIS WIFE.

JOB II. 10.

What!—Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil alſo?

THESE are the words of Job, uttered in the depth of his misfortunes, by way of reproof to his wife, for the counſel we find ſhe had given him in the foregoing verſe; namely, Not to retain his integrity any longer,—but to "curſe God and die." Though it is not very evident what was particularly meant and implied in the words,—"curſe God and die,"—yet it is certain, from Job's reply to them, that they directed him to ſome ſtep which was raſh and unwarrantable; and, probably, as it is generally explained, meant that he ſhould openly call God's juſtice to an account, and by a blaſphemous accuſation of it, provoke God to deſtroy his being: as if ſhe had ſaid,—"After ſo many ſad things which have befallen thee,—notwithſtanding thy integrity,—what gaineſt thou by ſerving God, ſeeing he bears thus hard upon thee, as though thou waſt his enemy?—Ought ſo faithful a ſervant as thou haſt been, to receive ſo much unkind treatment at his hands,—and tamely to ſubmit to it?—patiently to ſuſtain the

evils he has brought upon thy houſe, and neither murmur with thy lips, nor charge him with injuſtice?—Bear it not thus;—and as thy piety could not at firſt protect thee from ſuch misfortunes,—nor thy behaviour under them could ſince move God to take pity on thee,—change thy conduct towards him,—boldly expoſtulate with him,—upbraid him openly with unkindneſs,—call his juſtice and providence to an account for oppreſſing thee in ſo undeſerved a manner, and get that benefit by provoking him, which thou haſt not been able to obtain by ſerving him, to die at once by his hands, and be freed at leaſt from the greater miſery of a lingering and more tormenting death."

On the other hand, ſome interpreters tell us,—that the word *curſe*, in the original, is equivocal, and does more literally ſignify here, to bleſs than to blaſpheme; and conſequently, that the whole is rather to be conſidered as a ſarcaſtical ſcoff at Job's piety;—as if it had been ſaid,—"Go to, bleſs God, and die;—ſince thou art ſo ready to praiſe him in troubles as thou haſt done, go on in thy own way, and ſee how God will reward thee by a miſerable death, which thou canſt not avoid."

Without diſputing the merit of theſe two interpretations, it may not ſeem an improbable conjecture, that the words imply ſomething ſtill different from what is expreſſed in either of them;—and, inſtead of ſuppoſing them as an incitement to blaſpheme God,—

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which was madneſs,—or that they were intended as an inſult, which was unnatural,—that her advice to curſe God and die, was meant here, that he ſhould reſolve upon a voluntary death himſelf, which was an act not only in his own power, but what carried ſome appearance of a remedy with it, and promiſed, at leaſt at firſt ſight, ſome reſpite from pain, as it would put an end both to his life and his misfortunes together.

One may ſuppoſe that, with all the concern and affection which was natural, ſhe beheld her lord afflicted both with poverty and ſickneſs;—by one ſudden blow, brought down from his palace to the dunghill:—in one mournful day ſhe ſaw that not only the fortunes of his houſe were blaſted, but likewiſe the hopes of his poſterity cut off for ever by the untimely loſs of his children.—She knew he was a virtuous and an upright man, and deſerved a better fate;—her heart bled the more for him;—ſhe ſaw the proſpect before him was dreadful;—that there appeared no poſſible means which could retrieve the ſad ſituation of his affairs:—that death,—the laſt, the ſureſt friend to the unfortunate,—could only ſet him free;—and that it was better to reſolve upon that at once, than vainly endeavour to wade through ſuch a ſea of troubles, which, in the end, would overwhelm him. We may ſuppoſe her ſpirits ſinking under thoſe apprehenſions, when ſhe began to look upon his conſtancy as a fruitleſs virtue, and, from that perſuaſion, to have ſaid unto him,—Curſe

God,—depend no longer upon him, nor wait the iſſues of his providence, which has already forſaken thee:—as there is no help from that quarter, reſolve to extricate thyſelf;—and, ſince thou haſt met with no juſtice in this world,—leave it,—die, and force thy paſſage into a better country, where misfortunes cannot follow thee.

Whether this paraphraſe upon the words is juſt, or the former interpretations be admitted, the reply in the text is equally proper;—What!—Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and ſhall we not receive evil alſo? Are not both alike the diſpenſations of an all-wiſe and good Being, who knows and determines what *is beſt?* and wherefore ſhould I make myſelf the judge, to receive the one, and yet be ſo partial as to reject the other, when, by fairly putting both into the ſcale, I may be convinced how much the good outweighs the evil in all caſes? In my own, conſider how ſtrong this argument is againſt me.

In the beginning of my days, how did God crown me with honour! In how remarkable a manner did his providence ſet a hedge about me, and about all that I had on every ſide!—how he proſpered the works of my hands, ſo that our ſubſtance and happineſs increaſed every day!

And now, when, for reaſons beſt known to his infinite wiſdom, he has thought fit to try me with afflictions,—ſhall I rebel againſt him, in ſinning with my lips, and charging him fooliſhly?—God forbid!—O, rather, may I

look up towards that hand which has bruiſed me,—for he maketh ſore, and he bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole. From his bounty only has iſſued all I had; from his wiſdom—all I have loſt; for he giveth, and he hath taken away: bleſſed be his name!

There are few inſtances of particular virtue more engaging than thoſe of this heroic caſt; and, if we take the teſtimony of a heathen philoſopher upon it, there is not an object in this world which God can be ſuppoſed to look down upon with greater pleaſure than that of a good man involved in misfortunes, ſurrounded on all ſides with difficulties,—yet cheerfully bearing up his head, and ſtruggling againſt them with firmneſs and conſtancy of mind.—Certainly, to our conceptions, ſuch objects muſt be truly engaging:—and the reaſon of ſo exalted an encomium from this hand is eaſily to be gueſſed; no doubt, the wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers had found, from obſervation upon the life of man, that the many troubles and infirmities of his nature, the ſickneſſes, diſappointments, ſorrows for the loſs of children or property, with the numberleſs other calamities and croſs accidents to which the life of man is ſubject, were in themſelves ſo *great*;—and ſo *little* ſolid comfort to be adminiſtered from the mere refinements of philoſophy in ſuch emergencies, that there was no virtue which required greater efforts, or which was found ſo difficult to be atchieved upon moral principles,—upon moral princi-

ples, which had no foundation to ſuſtain this great weight which the infirmities of our nature laid upon it;—and, for this reaſon, 'tis obſervable, that there is no ſubject, upon which the moral writers of antiquity have exhauſted ſo much of their eloquence, or where they have ſpent ſuch time and pains, as in this of endeavouring to reconcile men to theſe evils; inſomuch, that from thence, in moſt modern languages, the patient enduring of affliction has, by degrees, obtained the name of Philoſopher, and almoſt monopolized the word to itſelf, as if it was the chief end or compendium of all the wiſdom which philoſophy had to offer. And indeed, conſidering what lights they had, ſome of them wrote exceedingly well; yet, as what they ſaid proceeded more from the head than the heart, 'twas generally more calculated to ſilence a man in his troubles, than to convince and teach him how to bear them; and, therefore, however ſubtle and ingenious their arguments might appear in the reading, 'tis to be feared they loſt much of their efficacy when tried in the application. If a man was thruſt back in the world by diſappointments, or, as was Job's caſe, had ſuffered a ſudden change in his fortunes, from an affluent condition was brought down by a train of cruel accidents, and pinched with poverty,—philoſophy would come in, and exhort him to ſtand his ground; —it would tell him, that the ſame greatneſs and ſtrength of mind which enabled him to behave well in the days of his proſperity,

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ſhould equally enable him to behave well in the days of his adverſity;—that it was the property of only weak and baſe ſpirits, who were inſolent in the one, to be dejected and overthrown by the other; whereas, great and generous ſouls were at all times calm and equal: as they enjoyed the advantages of life with indifference, they were able to reſign them with the ſame temper,—and, conſequently, were out of the reach of fortune. All which, however fine, and likely to ſatisfy the fancy of a man at eaſe, could convey but little conſolation to a heart already pierced with ſorrow;—nor is it to be conceived how an unfortunate creature ſhould any more receive relief from ſuch a lecture, however juſt, than a man racked with an acute fit of the gout or ſtone, could be ſuppoſed to be ſet free from torture by hearing from his phyſician a nice diſſertation upon his caſe. The philoſophic conſolations in ſickneſs, or in afflictions for the death of friends and kindred, were juſt as efficacious;—and were rather, in general, to be conſidered as good ſayings than good remedies;—ſo that, if a man was bereaved of a promiſed child, in whom all his hopes and expectations centered,—or a wife was left deſtitute to mourn the loſs and protection of a kind and tender huſband, Seneca or Epictetus would tell the penſive parent and diſconſolate widow,—that tears and lamentations for the dead were fruitleſs and abſurd!—that to die was the neceſſary and unavoidable debt of na-

ture;—and, as it could admit of no remedy, —'twas impious and fooliſh to grieve and fret themſelves upon it. Upon ſuch ſage counſel, as well as many other leſſons of the ſame ſtamp, the ſame reflection might be applied, which is ſaid to have been made by one of the Roman Emperors to one who adminiſtered the ſame conſolations to him on a like occaſion;—to whom, adviſing him to be comforted, and make himſelf eaſy, ſince the event had been brought about by fatality, and could not be helped,—he replied,—'That this was ſo far from leſſening 'his trouble,—that it was the very circum-'ſtance which occaſioned it.'—So that, upon the whole,—when the true value of theſe, and many more of their current arguments, have been weighed and brought to the teſt, —one is led to doubt whether the greateſt part of their heroes, the moſt renowned for conſtancy, were not much more indebted to good nerves and ſpirits, or the natural happy frame of their tempers, for behaving well, than to any extraordinary helps which they could be ſuppoſed to receive from their inſtructors; and, therefore, I ſhould make no ſcruple to aſſert, that one ſuch inſtance of patience and reſignation as this, which the Scripture gives us in the perſon of Job, not of one moſt pompouſly declaiming upon the contempt of pain and poverty, but of a man ſunk in the loweſt condition of humanity, to behold him when ſtripped of his eſtate,—his wealth, his friends, his children,—cheerfully holding

holding up his head, and entertaining his hard fortune with firmneſs and ſerenity,—and this, not from a ſtoical ſtupidity, but a juſt ſenſe of God's providence, and a perſuaſion of his juſtice and goodneſs in all his dealings;—ſuch an example, I ſay, as this, is of more univerſal uſe, ſpeaks truer to the heart, than all the heroic precepts which the pedantry of philoſophy has to offer.

This leads me to the point I aim at in this diſcourſe, namely, that there are no principles but thoſe of religion to be depended on in caſes of real diſtreſs; and that theſe are able to encounter the worſt emergencies; and to bear us up under all the changes and chances to which our life is ſubject.

Conſider then what virtue the very firſt principle of religion has, and how wonderfully it is conducive to this end. That there is a God, a powerful, a wiſe, a good Being, who firſt made the world, and continues to govern it;—by whoſe goodneſs all things are deſigned,—and by whoſe providence all things are conducted, to bring about the greateſt and beſt ends. The ſorrowful and penſive wretch that was giving way to his misfortunes, and mournfully ſinking under them, the moment this doctrine comes in to his aid, huſhes all his complaints,—and thus ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul:—'It is the 'Lord,—let him do what ſeemeth him good;' —without his direction, I know that no evil can befal me,—without his permiſſion, that no power can hurt me.—It is impoſſible a Being

Being ſo wiſe ſhould miſtake my happineſs, —or that a Being ſo good ſhould contradict it. If he has denied me riches or other advantages,—perhaps he foreſees the gratifying my wiſhes would undo me, and, by my own abuſe of them, be perverted to my ruin.—If he has denied me the requeſt of children,—or, in his providence, has thought fit to take them from me,—how can I ſay—whether he has not dealt kindly with me, and only taken that away which he foreſaw would embitter and ſhorten my days? It does ſo to thouſands, where the diſobedience of a thankleſs child has brought down the parents grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave. Has he viſited me with ſickneſs, poverty, or other diſappointments?—can I ſay, but theſe are bleſſings in diſguiſe?—ſo many different expreſſions of his care and concern to diſentangle my thoughts from this world, and fix them upon another,—another, a better world beyond this!—This thought opens a new ſcene of hope and conſolation to the unfortunate; —and, as the perſuaſion of a Providence reconciles him to the evils he has ſuffered,—this proſpect of a future life gives him ſtrength to deſpiſe them, and eſteem the light afflictions of his life as they are,—not worthy to be compared to what is reſerved for him hereafter.

Things are great or ſmall by compariſon,—and he who looks no farther than this world, and balances the accounts of his joys and ſufferings from that conſideration, finds all his

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ſorrows enlarged, and, at the cloſe of them, will be apt to look back, and caſt the ſame ſad reflection upon the whole which the Patriarch did to Pharaoh,—"That few and evil had "been the days of his pilgrimage." But let him lift up his eyes towards Heaven, and ſtedfaſtly behold the life and immortality of a future ſtate;—he then wipes away all tears from off his eyes for ever and ever;—like the exiled captive, big with the hopes that he is returning home,—he feels not the weight of his chains, nor counts the days of his captivity, but looks forward with rapture towards the country where his heart is fled before him.

Theſe are the aids which religion offers us towards the regulating of our ſpirit under the evils of life;—but, like great cordials, they are ſeldom uſed but on great occurrences.—In the leſſer evils of life we ſeem to ſtand unguarded, and our peace and contentment are overthrown, and our happineſs broke in upon by a little impatience of ſpirit, under the croſs and untoward accidents we meet with.—Theſe ſtand unprovided for, and we neglect them as we do the ſlighter indiſpoſitions of the body,—which we think not worth treating ſeriouſly,—and ſo leave them to Nature. In good habits of the body, this may do;—and I would gladly believe there are ſuch good habits of the temper; ſuch a complexional eaſe and health of heart, as may often ſave the patient much medicine.—We are ſtill to conſider,—that however ſuch good frames of mind are got,—they

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are worth preſerving by all rules:—patience and contentment,—which like the treaſure hid in the field, for which a man ſold all he had to purchaſe,—is of that price that it cannot be had at too great a purchaſe, ſince, without it, the beſt condition in life cannot make us happy;—and, with it, it is impoſſible we ſhould be miſerable, even in the worſt.—Give me leave, therefore, to cloſe this diſcourſe with ſome reflections upon the ſubject of a contented mind,—and the duty in man of regulating his ſpirit, in our way through life;—a ſubject in every body's mouth,—preached upon daily to our friends and kindred,—but too oft in ſuch a ſtyle, as to convince the party lectured only of this truth,—That we bear the misfortunes of others with excellent tranquillity.

I believe there are thouſands ſo extravagant in their ideas of contentment, as to imagine that it muſt conſiſt in having every thing in this world turn out the way they wiſh;—that they are to ſit down in happineſs, and feel themſelves ſo at eaſe in all points, as to deſire nothing better, and nothing more. I own there are inſtances of ſome, who ſeem to paſs through the world as if all their paths had been ſtrewed with roſe-buds of delight;—but a little experience will convince us, 'tis a fatal expectation to go upon.—We are born to trouble; and we may depend upon it, whilſt we live in this world we ſhall have it, though with intermiſſions;—that is, in whatever ſtate we are, we ſhall find a mix-

ture

ture of good and evil; and, therefore, the true way to contentment is to know how to receive theſe certain viciſſitudes of life,—the returns of good and evil, ſo as neither to be exalted by the one, or overthrown by the other, but to bear ourſelves towards every thing which happens, with ſuch eaſe and indifference of mind as to hazard as little as may be. This is the true temperate climate fitted for us by Nature, and in which every wiſe man would wiſh to live.—God knows, we are perpetually ſtraying out of it; and, by giving wings to our imaginations in the tranſports we dream of, from ſuch or ſuch a ſituation in life, we are carried away alternately into all the extremes of hot and cold, for which as we are neither fitted by nature, nor prepared by expectation, we feel them with all their violence, and with all their danger too.

God, for wiſe reaſons, has made our affairs in this world almoſt as fickle and capricious as ourſelves;—pain and pleaſure, like light and darkneſs, ſucceed each other;—and he that knows how to accommodate himſelf to their periodical returns, and can wiſely extract the good from the evil,—knows only how to live:—this is true contentment, at leaſt all that is to be had of it in this world; and for this every man muſt be indebted, not to his fortune but to himſelf.—And, indeed, it would have been ſtrange, if a duty ſo becoming us as dependent creatures,—and ſo neceſſary, beſides, to all our well-beings, had been placed

placed out of the reach of any in ſome meaſure to put in practice;—and, for this reaſon, there is ſcarce any lot ſo low, but there is ſomething in it to ſatisfy the man whom it has befallen; Providence having ſo ordered things, that in every man's cup, how bitter ſoever, there are ſome cordial drops,—ſome good circumſtances, which, if wiſely extracted, are ſufficient for the purpoſe he wants them,—that is, to make him contented, and, if not happy, at leaſt reſigned. May God bleſs us all with this ſpirit, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt! Amen.

SERMON XVI.

THE CHARACTER OF SHIMEI.

2 SAMUEL XIX. 21. 1ſt part.

But Abiſhai ſaid, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this?

——IT has not a good aſpect.—This is the ſecond time Abiſhai has propoſed Shimei's deſtruction; once in the 16th chapter, on a ſudden tranſport of indignation, when Shimei curſed David.—"Why ſhould this dead dog, "cried Abiſhai, curſe my lord the king? let "me go over, I pray thee, and cut off his "head."—This had ſomething at leaſt of gallantry in it; for, in doing it, he hazarded his own; and, beſides, the offender was not otherwiſe to be come at. The ſecond time is in the text, when the offender was abſolutely in their power,—when the blood was cool, and the ſuppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

——Shall not Shimei, anſwered Abiſhai, be put to death for this? So unrelenting a purſuit looks leſs like juſtice than revenge, which is ſo cowardly a paſſion, that it renders Abiſhai's firſt inſtance almoſt inconſiſtent with the ſecond. I ſhall not endeavour to reconcile them, but confine the diſcourſe ſimply to Shimei, and make ſuch reflections upon his character as may be of uſe to ſociety.

Upon

Upon the news of his ſon Abſalom's conſpiracy, David had fled from Jeruſalem, and from his own houſe, for ſafety: the repreſentation given of the manner of it is truly affecting:—never was a ſcene of ſorrow ſo full of diſtreſs!

The king fled with all his houſehold, to ſave himſelf from the ſword of the man he loved; he fled with all the marks of humble ſorrow,—"with his head covered and barefoot;" and as he went by the aſcent of mount Olivet, the ſacred hiſtorian ſays he wept:—ſome gladſome ſcenes, perhaps, which there had paſs'd,—ſome hours of feſtivity he had ſhared with Abſalom in better days, preſſed tenderly upon nature;—he wept at this ſad viciſſitude of things;—and all the people that were with him, ſmitten with his affliction, "covered "each man his head,—weeping as he went "up."

It was on this occaſion, when David had got to Bahurim, that Shimei the ſon of Gera, as we read in the 5th verſe, came out.—Was it with the choiceſt oils he could gather from mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds?—Times and troubles had not done enough; and thou cameſt out, Shimei, to add thy portion!——

"And as he came, he curſed David, and "threw ſtones and caſt duſt at him; and thus "ſaid Shimei, when he curſed: Go to, thou "man of Belial, thou haſt ſought blood,—"and behold thou art caught in thy own "miſchief; for now hath the Lord returned

"upon

"upon thee all the blood of Saul and his "houſe."

There is no ſmall degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a ſeaſon to give a mark of enmity and ill-will: a word,—a look, which at one time would make no impreſſion,—at another time wounds the heart, and like a ſhaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would ſcarce have reached the object aimed at.

This ſeemed to have been Shimei's hopes; but exceſs of malice makes men too quick-ſighted even for their own purpoſe. Could Shimei poſſibly have waited for the ebb of David's paſſions, and till the firſt great conflict within him had been over,—then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood muſt have hurt him:—his heart was poſſeſſed with other feelings, it bled for the deadly ſting which Abſalom had given him;—he felt not the indignity of a ſtranger:—"Behold, my "ſon Abſalom, who came out of my bowels, "ſeeketh my life!—how much more may "Shimei do it!—let him alone; it may be "the Lord may look upon my affliction, and "requite me good for this evil."

An injury unanſwered, in courſe, grows weary of itſelf, and dies away in a voluntary remorſe.

In bad diſpoſitions, capable of no reſtraint but fear,—it has a different effect;—the ſilent digeſtion of one wrong provokes a ſecond.—He purſues him with the ſame invective:—"and as David and his men went by the way,

"Shimei went along on the hill's ſide over "againſt him; and curſed as he went, and "caſt duſt at him."

The inſolence of baſe minds in ſucceſs is boundleſs, and would ſcarce admit of a compariſon, did not they themſelves furniſh us with one, in the degrees of their abjection, when evil returns upon them:—the ſame poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adverſary, in ſome inſtances, ſeems to exalt them above the point of courage, ſinks them, in others, even below cowardice:—not unlike ſome little particles of matter ſtruck off from the ſurface of the dirt by ſunſhine,—dance and ſport there whilſt it laſts,—but the moment 'tis withdrawn,—they fall down;—for duſt they are, —and unto duſt they will return;—whilſt firmer and larger bodies preſerve the ſtations which Nature has aſſigned them, ſubjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This laſt did not ſeem to be Shimei's caſe: in all David's proſperity, there is no mention made of him;—he thruſt himſelf forward into the circle, and, poſſibly, was numbered amongſt friends and well-wiſhers.

When the ſcene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his houſe in deſpair,—Shimei is the firſt man we hear of who comes out againſt him.

The wheel turns round once more;—Abſalom is caſt down, and David returns in peace:—Shimei ſuits his behaviour to the occaſion, and is the firſt man alſo who haſtes to greet him;

—and,

—and, had the wheel turn'd round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare ſay, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermoſt.

O Shimei! would to Heaven, when thou waſt ſlain, that all thy family had been ſlain with thee, and not one of thy reſemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly, and repleniſhed the earth; and, if I prophefy rightly,—ye will in the end *ſubdue* it!

There is not a character in the world which has ſo bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei. Whilſt power meets with honeſt checks, and the evils of life with honeſt refuge, the world will never be undone: but thou, Shimei, haſt ſapp'd it at both extremes; for thou corrupteſt proſperity,—and 'tis thou who haſt broken the heart of poverty; and, ſo long as worthleſs ſpirits can be ambitious ones, 'tis a character we ſhall never want. O! it infeſts the court,—the camp,—the cabinet! —it infeſts the church!—go where you will,—in every quarter, in every profeſſion, you ſee a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay!—

—Haſte, Shimei!—haſte, or thou wilt be undone for ever.—Shimei girdeth up his loins and ſpeedeth after him.—Behold the hand which governs every thing,—takes the wheels from off his chariot, ſo that he who driveth, driveth on heavily.—Shimei doubles his ſpeed,—but 'tis the contrary way; he flies like the wind over a ſandy deſert, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more:—ſtay, Shimei! 'tis your patron,—your friend,—your

benefactor; 'tis the man who has raiſed you from the dunghill!—'Tis all one to Shimei: Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the riſe and fall of it, with all the variations from ſcorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the ſmile will admit of.—Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—ſee,—it hangs over Shimei's brow.—Haſt thou been ſpoken for to the king or the captain of the hoſt without ſucceſs?—Look not into the court-calendar;—the vacancy is filled up in Shimei's face.—Art thou in debt?—though not to Shimei,—no matter;—the worſt officer of the law ſhall not be more inſolent.

What then, Shimei, is the guilt of poverty ſo black,—is it of ſo general a concern, that thou and all thy family muſt riſe up as one man to reproach it?—when it loſt every thing,—did it loſe the right to pity too? or did he who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, ſtrip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and ſupple the temper of your race? —Truſt me, ye have much to anſwer for; it is this treatment which it has ever met with from ſpirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greateſt of evils, and ſhun it as the worſt diſgrace; —and what is it, I beſeech you;—what is it that man will not do to keep clear of ſo ſore an imputation and puniſhment?—is it not to fly from this that "he riſes early,—late takes "reſt,—and eats the bread of carefulneſs?" —that he plots, contrives,—ſwears,—lies,— ſhuffles,—puts on all ſhapes,—tries all garments,

ments,—wears them with this or that ſide outward,—juſt as it favours his eſcape!

They who have conſidered our nature affirm, that ſhame and diſgrace are two of the moſt inſupportable evils of human life: the courage and ſpirits of many have maſtered other misfortunes, and borne themſelves up againſt them; but the wiſeſt and beſt of ſouls have not been a match for theſe; and we have many a tragical inſtance on record, what greater evils have been run into merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our fleſh,—ſo long as it is virtuous, could never break the ſpirits of a man; all its hunger, and pain, and nakedneſs, are nothing to it; they have ſome counterpoiſe of good: and beſides, they are directed by Providence, and muſt be ſubmitted to: but theſe are afflictions not from the hand of God, or Nature;—"for they do come "forth of the duſt," and moſt properly may be ſaid "to ſpring out of the ground;" and this is the reaſon they lay ſuch ſtreſs upon our patience,—and in the end, create ſuch a diſtruſt of the world, as makes us look up,—and pray, "Let me fall into thy hands, O "God! but let me not fall into the hands of "men."

Agreeable to this was the advice of Eliphas to Job in the day of his diſtreſs:—"acquaint "thyſelf (ſaid he) now with God."—Indeed his poverty ſeemed to have left him no other friends; the ſwords of the Sabeans had fright-

ened them away,—all but a few; and of what kind they were, the very proverb, of *Job's comforters*,—ſays enough.

It is an inſtance which gives one great concern for human nature, That a man, "who "always wept for him who was in trouble; "—who never ſaw any periſh for want of "clothing;—who never ſuffered the ſtranger "to lodge in the ſtreet, but opened his door "to the traveller;"—that a man of ſo good a character,—"That he never cauſed the "eyes of the widow to fail,—or had eaten "his morſel by himſelf alone, and the father-"leſs had not eaten thereof;"—that ſuch a man, the moment he fell into poverty, ſhould have occaſion to cry out for quarter,—"Have "mercy upon me, O my friends! for the hand "of God has touched me."—Gentleneſs and humanity, one would think, would melt the hardeſt heart, and charm the fierceſt ſpirit; bind up the moſt violent hand, and ſtill the moſt abuſive tongue;—but the experiment failed in a ſtronger inſtance of him, whoſe meat and drink it was to do us good; and in purſuit of which, whoſe whole life was a continued ſcene of kindneſs and of inſults, for which we muſt go back to the ſame explanation with which we ſet out,—and that is, the ſcandal of poverty.—

"This fellow, we know not whence he is," —was the popular cry of one part; and with thoſe who ſeemed to know better, the query did not leſſen the diſgrace,—Is not this the carpenter, the ſon of Mary?—of Mary! great God

God of Iſrael! What!—of the meaneſt of thy people! "for he had not regarded the low eſtate of his hand-maiden,"—and of the pooreſt, too! for ſhe had not a lamb to offer, but was purified, as Moſes directed in ſuch a caſe, by the oblation of a turtle dove.

That the Saviour of their nation could be poor, and not have where to lay his head,—was a crime never to be forgiven: and though the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its ſupport, were ſtronger arguments on its ſide, than his humiliation could be againſt it,—yet the offence ſtill remained;—they looked for the redemption of Iſrael; but they would have it only in thoſe dreams of power which filled their imagination.—

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only in the goldſmith's balance,—was this religion for you?—a religion whoſe appearance was not great and ſplendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whoſe principles and promiſes ſhewed more like the curſes of the law than its bleſſings:—for they called for ſufferings, and promiſed little but perſecutions.

In truth, it is not eaſy for tribulation or diſtreſs, for nakedneſs or famine, to make many converts out of pride; or reconcile a worldly heart to the ſcorn and reproaches which were ſure to be the portion of every one who believed a myſtery ſo diſcredited by the world, and ſo unpalatable to all its paſſions and pleaſures.

But, to bring this ſermon to its proper concluſion:—

If Aſtrea or Juſtice never finally took her leave of the world till the day that poverty firſt became ridiculous, it is matter of conſolation, that the God of Juſtice is ever over us;—that whatever outrages the lowneſs of our condition may be expoſed to from a mean and undiſcerning world,—that we walk in the preſence of the greateſt and moſt generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and ſtraitneſs of mind, and all thoſe little and illiberal paſſions with which we hourly inſult each other.

The worſt part of mankind are not always to be conquered;—but if they are,—'tis by the imitation of theſe qualities which muſt do it;—'tis true,—as I've ſhewn,—they may fail; but ſtill all is not loſt,—for if we conquer not the world,—in the very attempts to do it, we ſhall at leaſt conquer ourſelves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.

SERMON XVII.

THE CASE OF HEZEKIAH AND THE MESSENGERS *.

2 KINGS XX. 15.

And he ſaid, What have they ſeen in thine houſe? and Hezekiah anſwered, All the things that are in my houſe have they ſeen; there is nothing amongſt all my treaſures that I have not ſhewn them.

——AND where was the harm, you'll ſay, in all this?

'An eaſtern prince, the ſon of Baladine, 'had ſent meſſengers with preſents as far as 'from Babylon, to congratulate Hezekiah up-'on the recovery from his ſickneſs; and Heze-'kiah, who was a good prince, acted conſiſt-'ently with himſelf; "he received and enter-"tained the men, and hearkened unto them;" 'and before he ſent them away, he cour-'teouſly ſhewed them all that was worth a 'ſtranger's curioſity in his houſe and his king-'dom;—and in this, ſeemed only to have 'diſcharged himſelf of what urbanity or the 'etiquette of courts might require.' Notwithſtanding this, in the verſe which immediate follows the text, we find he had done amiſs; and as a puniſhment for it, that all

* Preached before his Excelleney the Earl of Hertford, at Paris, 1763.

his

his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in ſtore unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon:—the very place from whence the meſſengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not ſeem to have deſerved. To ſet this matter in a clear light, it will be neceſſary to enlarge upon the whole ſtory;—the reflections, which will ariſe out of it, as we go along, may help us;—at leaſt, I hope they will be of uſe on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Aſſyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was ſick even unto death; and that God ſends the prophet Iſaiah, with the unwelcome meſſage, "That he ſhould ſet "his houſe in order; for that he ſhould die, "and not live."

There are many inſtances of men, who have received ſuch news with the greateſt eaſe of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with ſmiles upon their countenances;—and this, either from ſtrength of ſpirits and the natural cheerfulneſs of their temper,—or that they knew the world, and cared not for it,—or expected a better;—yet thouſands of good men, with all the helps of philoſophy, and againſt all the aſſurances of a well-ſpent life, that the change muſt be to their account,—upon the approach of death have ſtill leaned towards this world, and wanted ſpirits and reſolution to bear the ſhock of a ſeparation from it for ever.

This,

This, in ſome meaſure, ſeemed to have been Hezekiah's caſe; for though he had walked before God in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his ſight,—yet we find that the haſty ſummons afflicted him greatly;—that upon the delivery of the meſſage he wept ſore;—that he turned his face towards the wall,—perhaps for the greater ſecrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himſelf thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his God with greater and more fervent attention.

—And he prayed, and ſaid, O Lord! I beſeech thee remember!——O Hezekiah! How couldſt thou fear that God had forgotten thee? or, how couldſt thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he called thee to receive its recompence!

But here it appears of what materials man is made. He purſues happineſs;—and yet is ſo content with miſery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it,—and ſay, "It "is good, Lord, to be here, and to build ta-"bernacles of reſt!" and ſo long as we are clothed with fleſh, and nature has ſo great a ſhare within us, it is no wonder if that part claims its right, and pleads for the ſweetneſs of life, notwithſtanding all its cares and diſappointments.

This natural weakneſs, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earneſt prayer for life; and yet, from the ſucceſs it met with, and the immediate change of God's purpoſe thereupon,

upon, it is hard to imagine, but that it muſt have been accompanied with ſome meritorious and more generous motive; and if we ſuppoſe, as ſome have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, becauſe that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whoſe preſervation lay next his heart, we may conſiſtently enough give this ſenſe to his prayer.

'O God! remember how I have walked 'before thee in truth;—how much I have 'done to reſcue thy religion from error and 'falſehood;—thou knoweſt that the eyes of 'the world are fixed upon me, as one that 'hath forſaken their idolatry, and reſtored 'thy worſhip;—that I ſtand in the midſt of 'a crooked and corrupt generation, which 'looks through all my actions, and watches 'all events which happen to me: if now they 'ſhall ſee me ſnatched away in the midſt of 'my days and ſervice, how will thy great 'name ſuffer in my extinction! Will not 'the heathen ſay, This is to ſerve the God of 'Iſrael!—How faithfully did Hezekiah walk 'before him!—What enemies did he bring 'upon himſelf, in too warmly promoting his 'worſhip! and now when the hour of ſick-'neſs and diſtreſs came upon him, and he 'moſt wanted the aid of his God,—behold 'how he was forſaken!'

It is not unreaſonable to aſcribe ſome ſuch pious and more diſintereſted motive to Hezekiah's deſire of life, from the iſſue and ſucceſs of his prayer.—"For it came to paſs,

"before

" before Iſaiah had gone out into the middle " court, that the word of the Lord came to " him, ſaying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah " I have heard his prayer, I have ſeen his " tears; and behold I will heal him."

It was upon this occaſion, as we read in the 12th verſe of this chapter, that Baradock-baladan, ſon of Baladine king of Babylon, ſent letters and a preſent unto Hezekiah: he had heard the fame of his ſickneſs and recovery; for as the Chaldeans were great ſearchers into the ſecrets of nature, eſpecially into the motions of the celeſtial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice, at that diſtance, of the ſtrange appearance of the ſhadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had inquired and learned upon what account, and in whoſe favour, ſuch a ſign was given; ſo that this aſtronomical miracle, beſides the political motive which it would ſuggeſt of courting ſuch a favourite of Heaven, had been ſufficient by itſelf to have led a curious people as far as Jeruſalem, that they might ſee the man for whoſe ſake the Sun had forſook his courſe.

And here we ſee how hard it is to ſtand the ſhock of proſperity; and how much truer a proof we give of our ſtrength in that extreme of life, than in the other.

In all the trials of adverſity, we find that Hezekiah behaved well;—nothing unmanned him. When beſieged by the Aſſyrian hoſt, which ſhut him up in Jeruſalem, and threatened his deſtruction,—he ſtood unſhaken, and depended

depended upon God's ſuccour!—when caſt down upon his bed of ſickneſs, and threatened with death, he meekly turned his face towards the wall,—wept and prayed, and depended upon God's mercy!—but no ſooner does proſperity return upon him, and the meſſengers from a far country come to pay the flatteſing homage due to his greatneſs, and the extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy, and ſinks under the weight of his good fortune; and with a tranſport unbecoming a wiſe man upon it, 'tis ſaid, he hearkened unto the men, and ſhewed them all the houſe of his precious things, the ſilver and the gold, the ſpices and the precious ointments, and all the houſe of his armour, and all that was found in his treaſures; that there was nothing in his houſe, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah ſhewed them not; for though it is not expreſsly ſaid here (though it is in the parallel paſſage in Chronicles)—nor is he charged by the prophet that he did this out of vanity and a weak tranſport of oſtentation,—yet, as we are ſure God could not be offended but where there was a real crime, we might reaſonably conclude that this was his,—and that He who ſearches into the heart of man, beheld that his was corrupted with the bleſſings he had given him, and that it was juſt to make what was the occaſion of his pride become the inſtrument of his puniſhment, by decreeing, That all the riches he had laid up in ſtore until that day, ſhould be carried away in triumph to Babylon: the very place from whence the meſ-

ſengers

ſengers had come who had been eye-witneſſes of his folly.

'O Hezekiah! how couldſt thou provoke 'God to bring this judgment upon thee? 'How could thy ſpirit, all meek and gentle as 'it was, have ever fallen into this ſnare? 'Were thy treaſures rich as the earth,— 'what! was thy heart ſo vain as to be lifted 'up therewith? Was not all that was valu- 'able in the world,—nay, was not Heaven 'itſelf almoſt at thy command whilſt thou 'waſt humble? and, How was it that thou 'couldſt barter away all this, for what was 'lighter than a bubble, and deſecrate an ac- 'tion ſo full of courteſy and kindneſs as thine 'appeared to be, by ſuffering it to take its 'riſe from ſo polluted a fountain?'

There is ſcarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analyſis of this kind.

We are a ſtrange compound; and ſome- thing foreign from what charity would ſuſpect, ſo eternally twiſts itſelf into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where in- tereſt liſts under it all the powers of diſguiſe, —but even in the moſt indifferent of our ac- tions,—not worth a fallacy,—by force of habit, we continue it; ſo that whatever a man is about,—obſerve him,—he ſtands armed inſide and out with two motives; an oſtenſible one for the world,—and another which he reſerves for his own private uſe.— This, you may ſay, the world has no concern with: it might have been ſo; but by obtrud-

ing

ing the wrong motive upon the world, and ſtealing from it a character, inſtead of winning one,—we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the other for deſerving it. Let us ſee if ſome ſocial virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

Vanity bids all her ſons be generous and brave,—and her daughters chaſte and courteous.—But why do we want her inſtructions?—Aſk the comedian, who is taught a part he feels not.—

Is it that the principles of religion want ſtrength, or that the real paſſion for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough? God! thou knoweſt they carry us too high;—we want not to be,—but to ſeem!—

Look out of your door,—take notice of that man: ſee what diſquieting, intriguing, and ſhifting, he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain-dealing!—three grains of honeſty would ſave him all this trouble:—alas! he has them not!—

Behold a ſecond, under a ſhow of piety, hiding the impurities of a debauched life!—he is juſt entering the houſe of God:—would he was more pure,—or leſs pious!—but then he could not gain his point!

Obſerve a third going on almoſt in the ſame track. With what an inflexible ſanctity of deportment he ſuſtains himſelf as he advances!

vances!—every line in his face writes abſtinence;—every ſtride looks like a check upon his deſires. See, I beſeech you, how he is cloked up with ſermons, prayers, and ſacraments; and ſo bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to ſpare for a worldly purpoſe!—he has armour at leaſt:—Why does he put it on? Is there no ſerving God without all this? Muſt the garb of religion be extended ſo wide, to the danger of its rending?—Yes truly, or it will not hide the ſecret:—and, What is that?

—That the ſaint has no religion at all!

But here comes Generoſity; giving,—not to a decayed artiſt,—but to the Arts and Sciences themſelves.—See,—he 'builds not 'a chamber in the wall apart for the pro-'phet;' but whole ſchools and colleges for thoſe who come after. Lord! how they will magnify his name!—'tis in capitals already; the firſt,—the higheſt, in the gilded rent-roll of every hoſpital and aſylum.

—One honeſt tear ſhed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic ſet of creatures does ſimulation make us! Who would divine that all that anxiety and concern, ſo viſible in the airs of one half of that great aſſembly, ſhould ariſe from nothing elſe, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of conſequence, penetration, parts, and conduct?—What a noiſe among the claimants about it! Behold Humility, out of mere pride!—and Honeſty, almoſt out of knavery!—Chaſ-

tity, never once in harm's way! and Courage, like a Spaniſh ſoldier upon an Italian ſtage,—a bladder full of wind!—Hark! that,—the ſound of that trumpet,—let not my ſoldier run;—'tis ſome good Chriſtian giving alms. O, Pity! thou gentleſt of human paſſions! ſoft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with ſo loud an inſtrument!

Thus ſomething jars, and will for ever jar in theſe caſes: Impoſture is all diſſonance, let what maſter ſoever of it undertake the part; let him harmonize and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another; and whilſt we have ears to hear, we ſhall diſtinguiſh it; 'tis Truth only which is conſiſtent and ever in harmony with itſelf: it ſits upon our lips, like the natural notes of ſome melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no;—it racks no invention to let ourſelves alone,—and needs fear no critic to have the ſame excellency in the heart which appears in the action.

It is a pleaſing alluſion the Scripture makes uſe of in calling us ſometimes a houſe, and ſometimes a temple, according to the more or leſs exalted qualities of the ſpiritual gueſt which is lodged within us. Whether this is the preciſe ground of the diſtinction, I will not affirm; but thus much may be ſaid, that, if we are to be temples, 'tis truth and ſingleneſs of heart which muſt make the dedication: 'tis this which muſt firſt diſtinguiſh them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impoſitions are practiſed by the hoſt upon the traveller,

T. Stothard del.t. R. Hancock sculp.t

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traveller, who tarries but for a moment, and returns not again.

We all take notice, how cloſe and reſerved people are;—but we do not take notice, at the ſame time, that every one may have ſomething to conceal, as well as ourſelves; and that we are only marking the diſtances and taking the meaſures of ſelf-defence from each other in the very inſtances we complain of. This is ſo true, that there is ſcarce any character ſo rare as a man of real, open, and generous integrity,—who carries his heart in his hand,—who ſays the thing he thinks, and does the thing he pretends. Though no one can diſlike the character,—yet Diſcretion generally ſhakes her head,—and the world ſoon lets him into the reaſon.

"O that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging "of way-faring men! that I might leave ſuch "a people, and go from them!"—Where is the man of a nice ſenſe of truth and ſtrong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world has not at one time or other wrung the ſame wiſh? and where lies the wilderneſs to which ſome one has not fled from the ſame melancholy impulſe?

Thus much for thoſe who give occaſion to be thought ill of.—Let us ſay a word or two unto thoſe who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant as much as I can on this head,—I will forbear to ſay, becauſe I do not think it, that 'tis a breach of Chriſtian charity to think or ſpeak evil of our neighbour, &c.

—We cannot avoid it: our opinions muſt follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in ſuch engagements and ſituations, that 'tis our duty to ſpeak what our opinions are;—but God forbid that this ever ſhould be done but from its beſt motive,—the ſenſe of what is due to virtue, governed by diſcretion, and the utmoſt fellow-feeling. Were we to go on otherwiſe, beginning with the great broad cloke of Hypocriſy, and ſo down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away, without mercy, all that looked ſeemly,—we ſhould leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to ſay to a character leſs equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world:—it is that of thoſe who, from a general diſtruſt of all that looks diſintereſted, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it,—immediately fall foul upon its motives: "Does Job ſerve God for nought?" What a vile inſinuation! Beſides, the queſtion was not, Whether Job was a rich man or a poor man?—but, Whether he was a man of integrity, or no? and the appearances were ſtrong on his ſide. Indeed it might have been otherwiſe; it was poſſible Job might be inſincere, and the Devil took the advantage of the dye for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible maſter; and yet we are always copying it! Does a man, from a real conviction of heart, forſake his vices?—the poſition is not to be allowed. No; his vices have forſaken him.

Does

Does a pure virgin fear God and ſay her prayers?—She is in her climacteric.

Does Humanity clothe and educate the unknown orphan?—Poverty! thou haſt no genealogies!—See! is he not the father of the child? Thus do we rob heroes of the beſt part of their glory,—their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it;—wreſt it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it with infamy. Undo it all,—I beſeech you: give him back his honour,—reſtore the jewel you have taken from him,—replace him in the eye of the world:

—it is too late!

It is painful to utter the reproaches which ſhould come in here.—I will truſt them with yourſelves: in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce ſuch fruits as will not ſet your teeth on edge;—for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praiſe of God and the happineſs of the world! which I wiſh.

SERMON XVIII.

THE LEVITE AND HIS CONCUBINE.

JUDGES XIX. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when there was no king in Iſrael, that there was a certain Levite ſojourning on the ſide of Mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.

—A CONCUBINE!—but the text accounts for it; "for in thoſe days there was no "king in Iſrael," and the Levite, you will ſay, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes;—and ſo, you may add, did his concubine too,—"for ſhe played the "whore againſt him, and went away."

—Then ſhame and grief go with her; and wherever ſhe ſeeks a ſhelter, may the hand of Juſtice ſhut the door againſt her!

Not ſo; for ſhe went unto her father's houſe in Bethlehem-judah, and was with him four whole months.—Bleſſed interval for meditation upon the fickleneſs and vanity of this world and its pleaſures! I ſee the holy man upon his knees,—with hands compreſſed to his boſom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking Heaven that the object which had ſo long ſhared his affections was fled!

The text gives a different picture of his ſituation; "for he aroſe and went after her, to "ſpeak friendly to her, and to bring her back "again, having his ſervant with him, and a "couple

" couple of aſſes: and ſhe brought him unto " her father's houſe; and when the father of " the damſel ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet " him."

—A moſt ſentimental group! you'll ſay; and ſo it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing. Give but the outlines of a ſtory,—let Spleen or Prudery ſnatch the pencil, and they will finiſh it with ſo many hard ſtrokes, and with ſo dirty a colouring, that Candour and Courteſy will ſit in torture as they look at it.—Gentle and virtuous ſpirits! ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings,—to you I addreſs myſelf, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the miſguided,—Whence is it that the world is not more jealous of your office? How often muſt ye repeat it, 'That ſuch a one's doing ſo or ſo,' is not ſufficient evidence by itſelf to overthrow the accuſed!—that our actions ſtand ſurrounded with a thouſand circumſtances which do not preſent themſelves at firſt ſight!—that the firſt ſprings and motives which impell'd the unfortunate, lie deeper ſtill!—and, that of the millions which every hour are arraign'd, thouſands of them may have err'd merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil! and, even when from the *heart*,—that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted,—the force of the paſſions,—the ſuitableneſs of the object, and the many ſtruggles of Virtue before ſhe fell,—

may be ſo many appeals from Juſtice to the judgment-ſeat of Pity!

Here then let us ſtop a moment, and give the ſtory of the Levite and his concubine a ſecond hearing. Like all others, much of it depends upon the telling; and, as the Scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a ſtory on which the heart cannot be at a loſs for what to ſay, or the imagination for what to ſuppoſe;—the danger is, Humanity may ſay too much.

"And it came to paſs in thoſe days, when "there was no king in Iſrael, that a certain "Levite ſojourning on the ſide of Mount "Ephraim, took unto himſelf a concubine."

O Abraham! thou father of the faithful! if this was wrong,—Why didſt thou ſet ſo enſnaring an example before the eyes of thy deſcendant? and, Why did the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and Jacob, bleſs ſo often the ſeed of ſuch intercourſes, and promiſe to multiply and make princes come out of them?

God can diſpenſe with his own laws: and accordingly we find the holieſt of the patriarchs, and others in Scripture, whoſe hearts cleaved moſt unto God, accommodating themſelves as well as they could to the diſpenſation; That Abraham had Hagar;—that Jacob, beſides his two wives, Rachel and Leah, took alſo unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes deſcended;—that David had ſeven wives and ten concubines;

bines;—Rehoboam, ſixty;—and that, in whatever caſes it became reproachable, it ſeemed not ſo much the thing itſelf as the abuſe of it, which made it ſo. This was remarkable in that of Solomon, whoſe exceſs became an inſult upon the privileges of mankind; for, by the ſame plan of luxury, which made it neceſſary to have forty thouſand ſtalls of horſes,—he had unfortunately miſcalculated his other wants, and ſo had ſeven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.

Wife,—deluded man! was it not that thou madeſt ſome amends for thy bad practice by thy good preaching, what had become of thee!—three hundred!—but let us turn aſide, I beſeech you, from ſo ſad a ſtumbling-block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine, to diſtinguiſh her from the more infamous ſpecies who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tell us, That in Jewiſh *œconomics*, theſe differ'd little from the wife, except in ſome outward ceremonies and ſtipulations, but agreed with her, in all the true eſſences of marriage, and gave themſelves up to the huſband (for ſo he is call'd) with faith plighted, with ſentiments, and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to ſhare his ſolitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in ſuch a ſituation; for, notwith-

notwithſtanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handſome things ſaid upon the ſweets of retirement, &c.—yet ſtill, "it is "not good for man to be alone:" nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant ſtuns our ears with upon the ſubject, ever give one anſwer of ſatisfaction to the mind; in the midſt of the loudeſt vauntings of philoſophy, Nature will have her yearnings for ſociety and friendſhip;—a good heart wants ſome object to be kind to;—and the beſt parts of our blood, and the pureſt of our ſpirits, ſuffer moſt under the deſtitution.

Let the torpid monk ſeek Heaven comfortleſs and alone.—God ſpeed him! For my own part, I fear, I ſhould never ſo find the way. Let me be wiſe and religious,—but let me be man. Wherever thy providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee,—give me ſome companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our ſhadows lengthen as the ſun goes down!—to whom I may ſay, How freſh is the face of Nature!—How ſweet the flowers of the field!—How delicious are theſe fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his paſſover, did the Levite eat them: for as they thus walked the path of life together,—ſhe wantonly turn'd aſide unto another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world who are generally outraged and borne down by

by the other half of it: but in this they have the advantage; whatever be the ſenſe of their wrongs, that Pride ſtands not ſo watchful a centinel over their forgiveneſs, as it does in the breaſts of the fierce and froward. We ſhould all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave; but it is apt to interpoſe its ill-offices in remiſſions, eſpecially of this kind. The truth is, it has its laws, to which the heart is not always a party; and acts ſo like an unfeeling engine in all caſes without diſtinction, that it requires all the firmneſs of the moſt ſettled humanity to bear up againſt it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to ſuſtain with himſelf,—his concubine,—and the ſentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him:—much matter for pleading,—and many an embarraſſing account on all ſides. In a period of four whole months, every paſſion would take its empire by turns; and in the ebbs and flows of the leſs unfriendly ones, Pity would find ſome moments to be heard,—Religion herſelf would not be ſilent,—Charity would have much to ſay;—and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of Mount Ephraim,—every grot and grove he paſſ'd by, would ſolicit the recollection of former kindneſs, and awaken an advocate in her behalf, more powerful than them all.

'I grant,—I grant it all,'—he would cry;—'tis foul! 'tis faithleſs!—but, Why is the door of mercy to be ſhut for ever againſt it?

'and,

'and, Why is it to be the only ſad crime that 'the injured may not remit, or reaſon, or 'imagination paſs over without a ſcar?—Is 'it the blackeſt? In what catalogue of 'human offences is it ſo marked? or, Is it, 'that of all others 'tis a blow moſt grievous 'to be endured?—The heart cries out, It is 'ſo: but let me aſk my own, What paſſions 'are they which give edge and force to this 'weapon which has ſtruck me? and, Whether 'it is not my own pride, as much as my vir-'tues, which at this moment excite the 'greateſt part of that intolerable anguiſh in 'the wound which I am laying to her charge? 'But, merciful Heaven, was it otherwiſe, 'why is an unhappy creature of thine to be 'perſecuted by me with ſo much cruel re-'venge and rancorous deſpite as my firſt 'tranſport called for?—Have faults no exte-'nuations? Makes it nothing, that when 'the treſpaſs was committed, ſhe forſook 'the partner of her guilt, and fled directly to 'her father's houſe? And is there no differ-'ence betwixt one propenſely going out of 'the road and continuing there, through de-'pravity of will,—and a hapleſs wanderer 'ſtraying by deluſion, and warily treading 'back her ſteps?—Sweet is the look of 'ſorrow for an offence, in a heart deter-'mined never to commit it more!—Upon 'that altar only could I offer up my wrongs. 'Cruel is the puniſhment which an in-'genuous mind will take upon itſelf, from 'the remorſe of ſo hard a treſpaſs againſt

'me; and if that will not balance the ac-
'count,—juſt God! let me forgive the reſt.
'Mercy well becomes the heart of all thy
'creatures!—but moſt of thy ſervant, a Le-
'vite, who offers up ſo many daily ſacrifices to
'thee, for the tranſgreſſions of thy people.—
—'But to little purpoſe,' he would add,
'have I ſerved at thy altar, where my buſi-
'neſs was to ſue for mercy, had I not learnt
'to practiſe it.'

Peace and happineſs reſt upon the head and heart of every man who can thus think!

"So he aroſe, and went after her, to ſpeak "friendly unto her:"—in the original,—*to ſpeak to her heart;*—to apply to their former endearments,—and to aſk, How ſhe could be ſo unkind to him, and ſo very unkind to herſelf?—

—Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are ſweet: not like the ſtrivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all who have thwarted them in their way;—but they are calm and courteous, like the ſpirit which watches over their character. How could ſuch a temper woo the damſel, and not bring her back! or, How could the father of the damſel, in ſuch a ſcene, have a heart open to any impreſſions but thoſe mentioned in the text;—"That "when he ſaw him, he rejoiced to meet him;"—urged his ſtay from day to day, with that moſt irreſiſtible of all invitations,—"Comfort "thy heart, and tarry all night, and let thine "heart be merry."

If

If Mercy and Truth thus met together in ſettling this account, Love would ſurely be of the party: great,—great is its power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itſelf! and ſo it was,—for the Levite aroſe up, and with him his concubine and his ſervant, and they departed.

It ſerves no purpoſe to purſue the ſtory further; the cataſtrophe is horrid, and would lead us beyond the particular purpoſe for which I have enlarged upon thus much of it; and that is, to diſcredit raſh judgment, and illuſtrate from the manner of conducting this drama, the courteſy which the *dramatis perſonæ* of every other piece may have a right to. Almoſt one half of our time is ſpent in telling and hearing evil of one another;—ſome unfortunate knight is always upon the ſtage;—and every hour brings forth ſomething ſtrange and terrible to fill up our diſcourſe and our aſtoniſhment, 'How people can be ſo fooliſh!'—and 'tis well if the compliment ends there; ſo that there is not a ſocial virtue for which there is ſo conſtant a demand,—or, conſequently, ſo well worth cultivating, as that which oppoſes this unfriendly current. Many and rapid are the ſprings which feed it; and various and ſudden, God knows, are the guſts which render it unſafe to us in this ſhort paſſage of our life! Let us make the diſcourſe as ſerviceable as we can, by tracing ſome of the moſt remarkable of them up to their ſource.

And,

And, firſt, there is one miſerable inlet to this evil, and which, by the way, if ſpeculation is ſuppoſed to precede practice, may have been derived, for aught I know, from ſome of our buſieſt enquirers after nature;—and that is, when with more zeal than knowledge we account for phenomena before we are ſure of their exiſtence.—"It is not the manner of "the Romans, to condemn any man to death" (much leſs to be martyred) ſaid Feſtus;—"and doth our law judge any man before it "hear him, and know what he doth?" cried Nicodemus: "and he that anſwereth, or de-"termineth a matter before he has heard it, "—it is folly, and a ſhame unto him."—We are generally in ſuch a haſte to make our own decrees, that we paſs over the juſtice of theſe,—and then the ſcene is ſo changed by it, that 'tis our own folly only which is real, and that of the accuſed which is imaginary: thro' too much precipitancy it will happen ſo; and then the jeſt is ſpoiled,—or we have criticiſed our own ſhadow.

A ſecond way is, when the proceſs goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information;—but do it from thoſe ſuſpected evidences, againſt which our Saviour warns us when he bids us "Not to judge according to "appearance."—In truth, 'tis behind theſe that moſt of the things which blind human judgment lie concealed;—and, on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be,—which are not: "Chriſt came eating "and drinking,—behold a wine-bibber!"—

he

he fat with ſinners,—he was their friend:—in many caſes of which kind, Truth, like a modeſt matron, ſcorns art,—and diſdains to preſs herſelf forwards into the circle to be ſeen!—ground ſufficient for Suſpicion to draw up the libel,—for Malice to give the torture,—or raſh Judgment to ſtart up and paſs a final ſentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote miſconduct are leſs diſputable, but are commented upon with an aſperity of cenſure, which a humane or a gracious temper would ſpare. An abhorrence againſt what is criminal, is ſo fair a plea for this, and looks ſo like virtue in the face, that in a ſermon againſt raſh judgment, it would be unſeaſonable to call it in queſtion,—and yet, I declare, in the fulleſt torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deſerve, that the ſimple apoſtrophe, 'Who 'made me to differ?—why was not I an 'example?' would touch my heart more, and give me a better earneſt of the commentator;—than the moſt corroſive period you could add. The puniſhment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it;—and were it not,—'tis piteous, the tongue of a Chriſtian (whoſe religion is all candour and courteſy) ſhould be made the executioner! We find in the diſcourſe between Abraham and the rich man, though the one was in Heaven and the other in Hell, yet ſtill the patriarch treated him with mild language:—"Son! Son, remember that "thou in thy life-time," &c.—And in the diſpute about the body of Moſes, between the Archangel

Archangel and the Devil (himſelf) St. Jude tells us, he durſt not bring a railing accuſation againſt him;—'twas unworthy his high character,—and, indeed, might have been impolitic too; for if he had (as one of our divines notes upon the paſſage) the Devil had been too hard for him at railing;—'twas his own weapon;—and the baſeſt ſpirits, after his example, are the moſt expert at it.

This leads me to the obſervation of a fourth cruel inlet into this evil; and that is, the deſire of being thought men of wit and parts; and the vain expectation of coming honeſtly by the title, by ſhrewd and ſarcaſtic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is ſetting up trade upon the broken ſtock of other people's failings,—perhaps their misfortunes:—ſo much good may it do them with what honour they can get,—the furtheſt extent of which, I think, is to be praiſed, as we do ſome ſauces, with tears in our eyes. It is a commerce moſt illiberal; and as it requires no vaſt capital, too many embark in it; and ſo long as there are bad paſſions to be gratified, and bad heads to judge,—with ſuch it may paſs for wit, or at leaſt, like ſome vile relation whom all the family is aſhamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name: as if the main eſſence of it was ſatire:—certainly there is a difference between Bitterneſs and Saltneſs:—that is,—between the malignity and the feſtivity of wit:—the one is a mere

quickneſs of apprehenſion, void of humanity, —and is a talent of the Devil: the other comes from the Father of Spirits, ſo pure and abſtracted from perſons, that willingly it hurts no man; or, if it touches upon an indecorum, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the abſurdity, and let it paſs. —He may ſmile at the ſhape of the obelisk raiſed to another's fame;—but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it.—

What then, ye raſh cenſurers of the world! Have ye no manſions for your credit but thoſe from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to ſhine in, that ye deſcend for it into the low caverns of abuſe and crimination? Have ye no ſeats but thoſe of the ſcornful to ſit down in? If Honour has miſtook his road, or the Virtues, in their exceſſes, have approached too near the confines of Vice, are they, therefore, to be caſt down the precipice? Muſt beauty for ever be trampled upon in the dirt for one—one falſe ſtep? And ſhall no one virtue or good quality, out of the thouſand the fair penitent may have left,—ſhall not one of them be ſuffered to ſtand by her?—Juſt God of Heaven and earth!

—But thou art merciful, loving, and righteous, and looketſt down with pity upon theſe wrongs thy ſervants do unto each other. Pardon us, we beſeech thee, for them, and all our tranſgreſſions! let it not be remembered that we were brethren of the ſame fleſh, the

ſame feelings and infirmities! O my God! write it not down in thy book that thou madeſt us merciful after thy own image!—that thou haſt given us a religion ſo courteous,—ſo good temper'd,—that every precept of it carries a balm along with it to heal the ſoreneſs of our natures and ſweeten our ſpirits, that we might live with ſuch kind intercourſe in this world, as will fit us to exiſt together in a better.

SERMON XIX.

FELIX'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS PAUL, EXAMINED.

ACTS XXIV. 26.

He hoped alſo, that money ſhould have been given him of Paul, that he might looſe him.

A NOBLE object to take up the conſideration of the Roman governor!

—"He hoped that money ſhould have been given him;"—for what end? To enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong?—and, From whence was it to be wrung? From the poor ſcrip of a diſciple of the carpenter's ſon, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and ſufferings!—

And was this Felix?—the great, the noble Felix.—Felix the happy!—the gallant Felix, who kept Druſilla!—Could he do this?—Baſe paſſion,—what canſt thou not make us do!

Let us conſider the whole tranſaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accuſed before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes;—of being a peſtilent fellow,—a mover of ſeditions, and a profaner of the temple, &c.—To which accuſations, the apoſtle having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence, from the 10th to the 22d verſe, to this purport:—He ſhews him, firſt,

firſt, that the whole charge was deſtitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce againſt him, if they had it;—that, on the contrary, he was ſo far from being the man Tertullus had repreſented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then ſtood charged,—and which they called Hereſy, led him to be the moſt unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exerciſe which it demanded of him, of having a conſcience void of offence at all times, both towards God and man:—that conſiſtently with this, his adverſaries had neither found him in the temple diſputing with any man, neither raiſing up the people, either in the ſynagogue, or in the city;—for this he appeals to themſelves:—that it was but twelve days ſince he came up to Jeruſalem for to worſhip:—that during that time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noiſe, without tumult: this he calls upon the Jews who came from Aſia, and were eye-witneſſes of his behaviour, to atteſt;—and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in ſo ſtrong a manner, and with ſuch plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adverſaries to reply.

There was, however, ſtill one adverſary in this court,—though ſilent, yet not ſatisfied.—

—Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up the charge: a more notable orator than thyſelf is riſen up,—'tis Avarice; and that too in the moſt fatal place for the priſoner it could have

taken poſſeſſion of;—'tis in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly;—that is, releaſed him without reward,—this ſubtile advocate told him he would loſe one of the profits of his employment;—and if he acknowledged the faith of Chriſt, which Paul occaſionally explained in his defence,—it told him, he might loſe the employment itſelf;—ſo that, notwithſtanding the character of the Apoſtle appeared (as it was) moſt ſpotleſs, and the faith he profeſſed ſo very clear, that as he urged it the heart gave its conſent,—yet at the ſame time, the paſſions rebelled; and ſo ſtrong an intereſt was formed thereby, againſt the firſt impreſſions in favour of the man and his cauſe, that both were diſmiſſed;—the one to a more convenient hearing, which never came; the other to the hardſhips of a priſon for two whole years,—hoping, as the text informs us, that money ſhould have been given him: and even at the laſt, when he left the province, willing to do the Jews a pleaſure;—that is,—to ſerve his intereſt in another ſhape, with all the conviction upon his mind that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheleſs, left the holy man bound, and conſigned over to the hopeleſs proſpect of ending his days in the ſame ſtate of confinement in which he had ungenerouſly left him.

One would imagine, as covetouſneſs is a vice not naturally cruel in itſelf, that there muſt

muſt certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breaſt, to account for a proceeding ſo contrary to humanity and his own conviction: and could it be of uſe to raiſe conjectures upon it, there ſeems but too probable grounds for ſuch a ſuppoſition. It ſeems that Druſilla, whoſe curioſity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul, —(for ſhe was a daughter of Abraham—as well as of Eve)—was a character which might have figured very well even in our own times; for, as Joſephus tells us, ſhe had left the Jew her huſband; and, without any pretence in their law to juſtify a divorce, had given herſelf up without ceremony to Felix; for which cauſe, though ſhe is here called his wife, ſhe was, in reaſon and juſtice, the wife of another man,—and conſequently lived in an open ſtate of adultery; —ſo that when Paul, in explaining the faith of Chriſt, took occaſion to argue upon the morality of the Goſpel,—and urged the eternal laws of juſtice, the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chaſtity was a branch,—it was ſcarce poſſible to frame his diſcourſe ſo (had he wiſhed to temporize) but that either her intereſt or her love muſt have taken offence: and though we do not read, like Felix, that ſhe trembled at the account, 'tis yet natural to imagine ſhe was affected with other paſſions, of which the apoſtle might feel the effects;—and 'twas well he ſuffered no more, if two ſuch violent

enemies as luſt and avarice were combined againſt him.

But this by the way;—for as the text ſeems only to acknowledge one of theſe motives, it is not our buſineſs to aſſign the other.

It is obſervable, that this ſame apoſtle, ſpeaking, in the Epiſtle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this ſame ruling paſſion, affirms, that it is the root of all evil; and I make no doubt but the remembrance of his own ſufferings had no ſmall ſhare in the ſeverity of the reflection.—Infinite are the examples where the love of money is only a ſubordinate and miniſterial paſſion, exerciſed for the ſupport of ſome other vices; and 'tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or luſt, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the leaſt mercy and diſcretion; in which caſes, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it is not the root of other evils,—but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recall what I have ſaid upon covetouſneſs, as a vice not naturally cruel; it is not apt to repreſent itſelf to our imaginations, at firſt ſight, under that idea: we conſider it only as a mean, worthleſs turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing what is right: but as it is a vice which does not always ſet up for itſelf,—to know truly what it is in this reſpect, we muſt know what maſters it ſerves:—they are many, and of various caſts and humours;—and each one lends

lends it ſomething of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I ſuppoſe, may be the cauſe that there is a greater and more whimſical myſtery in the love of money, than in the darkeſt and moſt nonſenſical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the beſt, and when the paſſion ſeems to ſeek nothing more than its own amuſement,—there is little,—very little, I fear, to be ſaid for its humanity.—It may be a ſport to the miſer;—but conſider,—it muſt be death and deſtruction to others.—The moment this ſordid humour begins to govern,—farewell all honeſt and natural affection! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!—how faſt the obligations vaniſh! ſee,—he is now ſtripped of all feelings whatever:—the ſhrill cry of Juſtice,—and the low lamentation of humble Diſtreſs, are notes equally beyond his compaſs!—Eternal God! ſee!—he paſſes by one whom thou haſt juſt bruiſed, without one penſive reflection!—he enters the cabin of the widow whoſe huſband and child thou haſt taken to thyſelf,—exacts his bond without a ſigh!—Heaven! if I am to be tempted,—let it be by glory,—by ambition,—by ſome generous and manly vice:—if I muſt fall, let it be by ſome paſſion which thou haſt planted in my nature, which ſhall not harden my heart, but leave me room at laſt to retreat and come back to thee!

It would be eaſy here to add the common arguments which reaſon offers againſt this vice:

vice: but they are ſo well underſtood, both in matter and form,—it is needleſs.

I might cite to you what Seneca ſays upon it;—but the misfortune is, that at the ſame time he was writing againſt riches, he was enjoying a great eſtate, and uſing every means to make that eſtate ſtill greater!

With infinite pleaſure might a preacher enrich his diſcourſe in this place, by weaving into it all the ſmart things which ancient or modern wits have ſaid upon the love of money:—he might inform you,

'—That poverty wants ſomething:—that 'covetouſneſs wanteth all!'

'That a miſer can only be ſaid to have 'riches as a ſick man has a fever, which holds 'and tyrannizes over the man,—not he over 'it!'

'That covetouſneſs is the ſhirt of the ſoul, '—the laſt vice it parts with!'

'That nature is content with few things; '—or, that nature is never ſatisfied at all,' &c.

The reflection of our Saviour, "That the "life of man conſiſteth not in the abundance "of the things which he poſſeſſeth,"—ſpeaks more to the heart;—and the ſingle hint of the Camel, and what a very narrow paſſage he has to go through,—has more coercion in it than all the ſee-ſaws of philoſophy.

I ſhall endeavour therefore to draw ſuch other reflections from this piece of ſacred hiſtory as are applicable to human life,—and more likely to be of uſe.

There

There is nothing generally in which our happineſs and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourſelves to the world;—and as we govern ourſelves by ſuch judgments, ſo we ſecure our peace and well-being in paſſing through it: the falſe ſteps and miſcarriages in life, iſſuing from a defect in this capital point, are ſo many and fatal, that there can be nothing more inſtructive than an inquiry into the cauſes of this perverſion, which often appears ſo very groſs in us, that were you to take a view of the world,—ſee what notions it entertains, and by what conſiderations it is governed,—you would ſay of the miſtakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions,—"That we "were wiſe to do evil; but to judge rightly, "had no underſtanding."

That in many dark and abſtracted queſtions of mere ſpeculation, we ſhould err,—is not ſtrange: we live among myſteries and riddles; and almoſt every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be ſaid to baffle our underſtandings,—yet ſeldom ſo as to miſtake in extremities, and take one contrary for another.—'Tis very rare, for inſtance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold;—or that we try the experiment of opium to keep us waking:—yet this we are continually attempting in the conduct of

of life, as well as in the great ends and meaſures of it. That ſuch wrong determinations in us do ariſe from any defect of judgment inevitably miſleading us,—would reflect diſhonour upon God; as if he had made and ſent men into the world on purpoſe to play the fool. His all-bountiful hand made his judgment, like his heart, upright; and the inſtances of his ſagacity, in other things, abundantly confirm it: we are led therefore in courſe to a ſuppoſition, that in all inconſiſtent inſtances there is a ſecret bias, ſomehow or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aſide from reaſon and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to ſearch for it in ourſelves, we ſhall find it regiſtered in this tranſaction of Felix: and we may depend, that in all wrong judgments whatever in ſuch plain caſes as this, that the ſame explanation muſt be given of it which is given in the text,—namely, That it is ſome ſelfiſh conſideration—ſome ſecret dirty engagement with ſome little appetite, which does us ſo much diſhonour.

The judgments of the more diſintereſted and impartial of us, receive no ſmall tincture from our affections: we generally conſult them in all doubtful points; and it happens well if the matter in queſtion is not almoſt ſettled before the arbitrator is called into the debate.—But in the more flagrant inſtances, where the paſſions govern the whole man, 'tis melancholy to ſee the office to which

which Reaſon, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced; ſerving the lower appetites in the diſhoneſt drudgery of finding out arguments to juſtify the preſent purſuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we ſhould retire a little from the world, to ſee all its pleaſures,—and pains too, in their proper ſize and dimenſions.—This, no doubt, was the reaſon St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his diſcourſe upon the day of judgment, on purpoſe to take the heart off from this world and its pleaſures; which diſhonour the underſtanding ſo, as to turn the wiſeſt of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your obſervations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has ſupported thoſe deſperate opinions which have ſo long divided the Chriſtian world,—and are likely to divide it for ever.

Conſider popery well; you will be convinced, that the trueſt definition which can be given of it is,—That it is a pecuniary ſyſtem, well contrived to operate upon men's paſſions and weakneſs, whilſt their pockets are o'picking! Run through all the points of difference between us;—and when you ſee that, in every one of them, they ſerve the ſame end which Felix had in view, either of money or power, there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud ariſes which is ſpread over the underſtanding.

If this reaſoning is concluſive with regard to thoſe who merely differ from us in religion,

ligion,—let us try if it will not hold good with regard to thoſe who have none at all;—or rather, who affect to treat all perſuaſions of it with ridicule alike. Thanks to good ſenſe, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humour is going down, and ſeems to be ſettling at preſent chiefly amongſt the inferior claſſes of people,—where it is likely to reſt. As for the loweſt ranks, though they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are they not likely to be ſtruck with this one, of making merry with that which is their conſolation; they are too ſerious a ſet of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.—

There is enough, however, of it in the world to ſay, that this all-ſacred ſyſtem, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the firſt object that the giddy and inconſiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment, do you believe that one in a thouſand does it from conviction,—or from arguments which a courſe of ſtudy,—much cool reaſoning, and a ſober inquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the queſtion, have furniſhed him with?—The years and way of life of the moſt forward of theſe, lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays ſo many reſtraints upon us, is a troubleſome companion to thoſe who will lay no reſtraints upon themſelves;—and for this reaſon there is nothing more

common to be obſerved, than that the little arguments and cavils which ſuch men have gathered up againſt it in the early part of their lives, — how conſiderable ſoever they may have appeared, when viewed through their paſſions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,—yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the purſuit pretty well over,—and reaſon and judgment have got poſſeſſion of their empire,—

—They ſeldom fail of bringing the loſt ſheep back to his fold.

May God bring us all there. Amen.

SERMON XX.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Luke, xv. 13.

I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

SERMON XX.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

LUKE XV. 13.

And not many days after, the younger ſon gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwiſe, that leſſons of wiſdom have never ſuch power over us as when they are wrought into the heart through the ground-work of a ſtory which engages the paſſions. Is it that we are like iron, and muſt firſt be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart ſo in love with deceit, that, where a true report will not reach it, we muſt cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whether this parable of the Prodigal (for ſo it is uſually called) is really ſuch,—or built upon ſome ſtory known at that time in Jeruſalem, is not much to the purpoſe; it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the beſt moral account we can.

"A certain man," ſays our Saviour, "had "two ſons, and the younger of them ſaid to "his father, Give me the portion of goods "which falls to me: and he divided unto "them his ſubſtance. And not many days "after, the younger ſon gathered all together,

" and took his journey into a far country, and " there waſted his ſubſtance with riotous " living."

The account is ſhort: the intereſting and pathetic paſſages with which ſuch a tranſaction would be neceſſarily connected, are left to be ſupplied by the heart:—the ſtory is ſilent,—but Nature is not:—much kind advice, and many a tender expoſtulation, would fall from the father's lips, no doubt, upon this occaſion.

He would diſſuade his ſon from the folly of ſo raſh an enterprize, by ſhewing him the dangers of the journey,—the inexperience of his age,—the hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue, would run, without a guide, without a friend: he would tell him of the many ſnares and temptations which he had to avoid or encounter at every ſtep,—the pleaſures which would ſolicit him in every luxurious court,—the little knowledge he could gain,—except that of evil: he would ſpeak of the ſeductions of women,—their charms,—their poiſons;—what hapleſs indulgences he might give way to when far from reſtraint, and the check of giving his father pain.

The diſſuaſive would but inflame his deſire. —He gathers all together.

——I ſee the picture of his departure;—the camels and aſſes loaden with his ſubſtance, detached on one ſide of the piece, and already on their way:—the prodigal ſon ſtanding on the fore-ground, with a forced ſedateneſs, ſtruggling againſt the fluttering movement of

joy,

joy, upon his deliverance from reſtraint:—the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:—the father,—ſad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic ſentiment, 'that all would not go well with 'his child,'—approaching to embrace him and bid him adieu.—Poor inconſiderate youth! From whoſe arms art thou flying? From what a ſhelter art thou going forth into the ſtorm? Art thou weary of a father's affection,—of a fathers care? or, Hopeſt thou to find a warmer intereſt, a truer counſellor, or a kinder friend in a land of ſtrangers, where youth is made a prey, and ſo many thouſands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their ſpoils?

We will ſeek no farther than this idea for the extravagances by which the prodigal ſon added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune waſted,—the followers of it fled in courſe,—the wants of nature remain,—the hand of God gone forth againſt him;—"for "when he had ſpent all, a mighty famine "aroſe in that country."—Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and diſtreſs;—ſtrayed out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his abſence with anguiſh;—cut off from all his tender offices by his folly,—and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times!

Nothing ſo powerfully calls home the mind as diſtreſs! the tenſe fibre then relaxes,—the ſoul retires to itſelf,—ſits penſive and ſuſceptible of right impreſſions: if we have a

friend, 'tis then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindneſſes preſs upon our mind.—Gracious and bountiful God! Is it not for this that they who, in their proſperity, forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their ſorrow? When our heart is in heavineſs, upon whom can we think but thee, who knoweſt our neceſſities afar off,—putteſt all our tears in thy bottle,—ſeeſt every careful thought,—hearſt every ſigh and melancholy groan we utter! Strange!—that we ſhould only begin to think of God with comfort, when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing elſe!

Man ſurely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet, "unleſs he ſuffers in the "fleſh, he will not ceaſe from ſin," though it is ſure to bring pain and miſery upon his head for ever.

Whilſt all went pleaſurable on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father;—no pang of remorſe for the ſufferings in which he had left him, or reſolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly:—his firſt hour of diſtreſs ſeem'd to be his firſt hour of wiſdom?—"When he came "to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſer-"vants of my father have bread enough and "to ſpare, whilſt I periſh!"

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or other dying by hunger, is the greateſt; and it is wiſely wove into our frame to awaken man to induſtry, and call forth his talents;

and

and though we ſeem to go on careleſsly ſporting with it as we do with other terrors,—yet he that ſees this enemy fairly, and in his moſt frightful ſhape, will need no long remonſtrance to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the caſe of the prodigal;—he aroſe to go to his father.

——Alas! How ſhould he tell his ſtory?—Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he ſhall give in to his father the ſad *items* of his extravagance.

——The feaſts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the eaſt,—the coſts of Aſiatic rarities,—and of Aſiatic cooks to dreſs them;—the expences of ſinging men and ſinging women,—the flute, the harp, the ſackbut, and of all kinds of muſic;—the dreſs of the Perſian courts, how magnificent! their ſlaves how numerous!—their chariots, their horſes, their palaces, their furniture, what immenſe ſums they had devoured!—what expectations from ſtrangers of condition! what exactions!

How ſhall the youth make his father comprehend that he was cheated at Damaſcus by one of the beſt men in the world;—that he had lent a part of his ſubſtance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had ſwallowed his beſt pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead;—that he had been ſold by a man of honour for twenty ſhekels of ſilver to a worker in graven images;—that the images he had purchaſed had

profited him nothing;—that they could not be tranſported acroſs the wilderneſs, and had been burnt with fire at Shuſan;—that the * apes and peacocks, which he had ſent for from Tarſis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt:—that all had gone wrong ſince the day he forſook his father's houſe?

——Leave the ſtory;—it will be told more conciſely.—"When he was yet afar off, his "father ſaw him;"—Compaſſion told it in three words,—"he fell upon his neck, and "kiſſed him."

Great is the power of eloquence; but never is it ſo great as when it pleads along with Nature, and the culprit is a child ſtrayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears. Caſuiſts may ſettle the point as they will; but what could a parent ſee more in the account than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart too open for the world,—ſmitten with ſtrong ſenſations of pleaſures, and ſuffered to ſally forth unarm'd into the midſt of enemies ſtronger than himſelf?

Generoſity ſorrows as much for the overmatched, as Pity herſelf does.

The idea of a ſon ſo ruin'd, would double the father's careſſes: every effuſion of his tenderneſs would add bitterneſs to his ſon's remorſe,—'Gracious Heaven! what a father 'have I rendered miſerable!'

* *Vide* 2 Chron. ix. 21.

"And

"And he ſaid, I have ſinned againſt Hea-
"ven, and in thy ſight, and am no more
"worthy to be called thy ſon."

"But the father ſaid, Bring forth the beſt
"robe."

O ye affections! how fondly do you play at croſs purpoſes with each other!—'Tis the natural dialogue of true tranſport: joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itſelf in the offence,—words are too cold; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of eſteem.

"And he ſaid unto his ſervants, Bring forth
"the beſt robe, and put it on him: and put
"a ring on his hand, and ſhoes on his feet,
"and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us
"eat and drink, and be merry."

When the affections ſo kindly break looſe, Joy is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taſte it: the cold Stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the muſic, may aſk ſullenly (with the elder brother) What it means? and refuſe to enter: but the humane and compaſſionate all fly impetuouſly to the banquet, given for "a ſon
"who was dead, and is alive again;—who
"was loſt, and is found." Gentle ſpirits, light up the pavilion with a ſacred fire; and parental love and filial piety, lead in the maſk with riot and wild feſtivity!—Was it not for this that God gave man muſic to ſtrike upon the kindly paſſions; that Nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and, as chief governeſs of the feaſt, poured

forth wine into the goblet to crown it with gladneſs?

The intention of this parable is ſo clear from the occaſion of it, that it will not be neceſſary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: it was deſigned by way of indirect remonſtrance to the Scribes and Phariſees, who animadverted upon our Saviour's conduct, for entering ſo freely into conferences with ſinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end, he propoſes the parable of the ſhepherd, who left his ninety-and-nine ſheep that were ſafe in the fold, to go and ſeek for one ſheep that was gone aſtray,—telling them, in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a phyſician,—but they that were ſick: and here, to carry on the ſame leſſon, and to prove how acceptable ſuch a recovery was to God, he relates this account of the prodigal ſon and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a ſubject of much edification to convince you here, that our Saviour, by the prodigal ſon, particularly pointed at thoſe who are *ſinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by divine grace to repentance;—and that, by the elder brother, he intended as manifeſtly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their converſion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promiſes of God.

Theſe uſes have been ſo ably ſet forth, in ſo many good ſermons upon the Prodigal Son,

Son, that I ſhall turn aſide from them at preſent, and content myſelf with ſome reflections upon that fatal paſſion which led him,—and ſo many thouſands after the example, "to gather all he had together, and "take his journey into a far country."

The love of variety, or curioſity of ſeeing new things, which is the ſame, or at leaſt a ſiſter paſſion to it,—ſeems wove into the frame of every ſon and daughter of Adam; we uſually ſpeak of it as one of Nature's levities, though planted within us for the ſolid purpoſes of carrying forward the mind to freſh inquiry and knowledge. Strip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the preſent page, and we ſhould all of us reſt at eaſe with ſuch objects as preſented themſelves in the pariſh or province where we firſt drew breath.

It is to this ſpur, which is ever in our ſides, that we owe the impatience of this deſire for travelling: the paſſion is no way bad,—but, as others are,—in its miſmanagement or exceſs;—order it rightly, the advantages are worth the purſuit;—the chief of which are,—to learn the languages, the laws and cuſtoms, and underſtand the government and intereſt of other nations;—to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more eaſily for converſation and diſcourſe;—to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nurſery miſtakes; and by ſhowing

ing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments:—by taſting perpetually the varieties of Nature, to know what *is good;*—by obſerving the addreſs and arts of man, to conceive what *is ſincere;*—and, by ſeeing the difference of ſo many various humours and manners,—to look into ourſelves, and form our own.

This is ſome part of the cargo we might return with; but the impulſe of ſeeing new ſights, augmented with that of getting clear from all leſſons both of wiſdom and reproof at home,—carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account; on the contrary, if the ſcene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original,—will it not be well if ſuch an adventurer, with ſo unpromiſing a ſetting out,—without *carte*,—without compaſs,—be not caſt away for ever;—and may he not be ſaid to eſcape well,—if he return to his country only as naked as he firſt left it?

But you will ſend an able pilot with your ſon:—a ſcholar.

If wiſdom can ſpeak in no other language but Greek or Latin,—you do well:—or, if mathematics will make a man a gentleman,—or natural philoſophy but teach him to make a bow,—he may be of ſome ſervice in introducing your ſon into good ſocieties, and ſupporting him in them when he has done;—but the upſhot will be generally this, that, in the moſt preſſing occaſions of addreſs,—if he is a

mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry,—and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme; he ſhall be eſcorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books,—but from his own experience;—a man who has been employed on ſuch ſervices, and thrice made *the tour of Europe with ſucceſs*;—

——That is, without breaking his own or his pupil's neck;—for if he is ſuch as my eyes have ſeen! ſome broken *Swiſs valet de chambre*,—ſome general undertaker, who will perform the journey in ſo many months, *if God permit*,—much knowledge will not accrue;—ſome profit at leaſt;—he will learn the amount, to a halfpenny, of every ſtage from Calais to Rome;—he will be carried to the beſt inns,—inſtructed where there is the beſt wine, and ſup a livre cheaper than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himſelf.——Look at our governor, I beſeech you!—ſee, he is an inch taller as he relates the advantages!

——And here endeth his pride, his knowledge, and his uſe.

But, when your ſon gets abroad, he will be taken out of his hand, by his ſociety with men of rank and letters, with whom he will paſs the greateſt part of his time.

Let me obſerve, in the firſt place,—that company which is really good is very rare, and very ſhy; but you have ſurmounted this difficulty, and procured him the beſt letters of recom-

recommendation to the moſt eminent and reſpectable in every capital.

And I anſwer, that he will obtain all by them which courteſy ſtrictly ſtands obliged to pay on ſuch occaſions, but no more.

There is nothing in which we are ſo much deceived as in the advantages propoſed from our connexions and diſcourſe with the *literati*, &c. in foreign parts; eſpecially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or ſtudy.

Converſation is a traffic; and if you enter into it without ſome ſtock of knowledge to balance the account perpetually betwixt you, —the trade drops at once:—and this is the reaſon,—however it may be boaſted to the contrary, why travellers have ſo little (eſpecially good) converſation with natives,—owing to their ſuſpicion,—or, perhaps, conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the converſation of young itinerants worth the trouble of their bad language,—or the interruption of their viſits.

The pain on theſe occaſions is uſually reciprocal; the conſequence of which is, that the diſappointed youth ſeeks an eaſier ſociety; and as bad company is always ready, and ever lying in wait,—the career is ſoon finiſhed; and the poor prodigal returns the ſame object of pity with the prodigal in the Goſpel.

SERMON XXI.

NATIONAL MERCIES CONSIDERED *.

DEUTERONOMY VI. 20, 21.

And when thy ſon aſketh thee in time to come, ſaying, What mean the teſtimonies, and the ſtatutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then thou ſhalt ſay unto thy ſon, We were Pharaoh's bondſmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THESE are the words which Moſes left as a ſtanding anſwer for the children of Iſrael to give their poſterity, who in time to come might become ignorant, or unmindful of the many and great mercies which God had vouchſafed to their forefathers: all which had terminated in that one of their deliverance out of bondage.

Though they were directed to ſpeak in this manner, each man to his ſon, yet one cannot ſuppoſe that the direction ſhould be neceſſary for the next generation,—for the children of thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes of God's providence: it does not ſeem likely that any of them ſhould arrive to that age of reaſoning which would put them upon aſking the ſuppoſed queſtion, and not be long beforehand inſtructed in the anſwer. Every parent would tell his child the hardſhips of his captivity,

* On the Inauguration of his preſent Majeſty.

and

and the amazing particulars of his deliverance: the ſtory was ſo uncommon,—ſo full of wonder,—and withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of ſuch tranſport, it could not poſſibly be kept a ſecret:—the piety and gratitude of one generation would anticipate the curioſity of another; their ſons would learn the ſtory with their language.

This probably might be the caſe with the firſt or ſecond race of people; but in proceſs of time, things might take a different turn: a long and diſturbed poſſeſſion of their liberties might blunt the ſenſe of thoſe providences of God which had procured them, and ſet the remembrance of all his mercies at too great a diſtance from their hearts. After they had for ſome years been eaſed of every real burden, an exceſs of freedom might make them reſtleſs under every imaginary one, and, amongſt others, that of their religion; from whence they might ſeek occaſion to enquire into the foundation and fitneſs of its ceremonies, its ſtatutes, and its judgments.

They might aſk, What meant ſo many commands, in matters which to them appeared indifferent in their own natures? What policy in ordaining them? and, What obligation could there lye upon reaſonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of ſuch unaccountable injunctions, ſo unworthy the wiſdom of God?

Hereafter, poſſibly, they might go further lengths; and though their natural bent was generally towards ſuperſtition, yet ſome adventurers,

venturers, as is ever the caſe, might ſteer for the oppoſite coaſt, and as they advanced, might diſcover that all religions, of what denominations or complexions ſoever, were alike:—that the religion of their own country, in particular, was a contrivance of the prieſts and Levites,—a phantom dreſſed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear:—that its rites and ceremonies, and numberleſs injunctions, were ſo many different wheels in the ſame political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuſe the ignorant, and keep them in ſuch a ſtate of darkneſs as clerical juggling requires.

That as for the moral part of it, though it was unexceptionable in itſelf,—yet it was a piece of intelligence they did not ſtand in want of; men had natural reaſon always to have found it out,—and wiſdom to have practiſed it, without Moſes's aſſiſtance.

Nay, poſſibly, in proceſs of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controverſy:—when they had given their ſyſtem of infidelity all the ſtrength it could admit of from reaſon, they might begin to embelliſh it with ſome more ſprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Iſraelite, when he had eaten and was full, might give free ſcope and indulgence to this talent. As arguments and ſober reaſoning fail'd, he might turn the edge of his wit againſt types and ſymbols, and treat all the myſteries of his religion, and every thing that could be ſaid on ſo ſerious a ſubject,

ſubject, with raillery and mirth: he might give vent to a world of pleaſantry upon many ſacred paſſages of his law: he might banter the golden calf, or the brazen ſerpent, with great courage,—and confound himſelf in the diſtinctions of clean and unclean beaſts, by the deſperate ſallies of his wit againſt them.

He could but poſſibly take one ſtep farther; when the land which flowed with milk and honey, had quite worn out the impreſſions of his yoke, and bleſſings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious concluſion:—That there was no Being who was the author and beſtower of them,—but that it was their own arm, and the mightineſs of Iſraelitiſh ſtrength, which had put them, and kept them, in poſſeſſion of ſo much happineſs.—

O Moſes,—How would thy meek and patient ſpirit have been put to the torture by ſuch a return! If a propenſity towards ſuperſtition in the Iſraelites did once betray thee into ſuch an exceſs of anger, that thou threweſt the two tables out of thy hands, which God had wrote, and careleſsly hazardedſt the whole treaſure of the world, — with what indignation and honeſt anguiſh wouldſt thou have heard the ſcoffings of thoſe who denied the hand which brought them forth, and ſaid,—Who is God, that we ſhould obey his voice?—with what force and vivacity wouldſt thou have reproached them with the hiſtory of their own nation!—that if too free an enjoyment of God's bleſſings had

made

made them forget to look backwards,—it was neceſſary to remind them, that their fore-fathers were Pharoah's bondſmen in Egypt, without proſpect of deliverance: that the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a ſucceſſion of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one ſtruggle for their liberty: that after the expiration of that hopeleſs period, when no natural means favoured the event, they were ſnatched, almoſt againſt their own wills, out of the hands of their oppreſſors, and led through an ocean of dangers, to the poſſeſſion of a land of plenty: that this change in their affairs, was not the produce of chance or fortune,—nor was it projected or executed by any atchievement or plan of human device, which might ſoon again be defeated by ſuperior ſtrength or policy from without, or from force of accidents from within; from change of circumſtances, humours, and paſſions of men, all which generally had a ſway in the riſe and fall of kingdoms,—but that all was brought about by the power and goodneſs of God, who ſaw and pitied the afflictions of a diſtreſſed people, and by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, ſet them free from the yoke of oppreſſion.

That ſince that miraculous eſcape, a ſeries of ſucceſſes not to be accounted for by ſecond cauſes and the natural courſe of events, had demonſtrated not only God's providence in general, but his particular providence and attachment to them;—that nations greater

and mightier than they, were driven out before them, and their lands given to them for an everlaſting poſſeſſion.—

This was what they ſhould teach their children, and their children's children after them.—Happy generations, for whom ſo joyful a leſſon was prepared! happy indeed! had ye at all times known to have made the uſe of it which Moſes continually exhorted,— "of "drawing nigh unto God with all your hearts, "who had been ſo nigh unto you."

And here let us drop the argument as it reſpects the Jews, and for a moment turn it towards ourſelves: the preſent occaſion, and the recollection which is natural upon it, of the many other parts of this complicated bleſſing vouchſafed to us, ſince we became a nation, making it hard to deſiſt from ſuch an application.

I begin with the firſt in order of time, as well as the greateſt of national deliverances,—our deliverance from darkneſs and idolatry, by the conveyance of the light which Chriſtianity brought with it into Britain, ſo early as in the life-time of the apoſtles themſelves, or at furtheſt, not many years after their death.

Though this might ſeem a bleſſing conveyed and offered to us in common with other parts of the world, yet when you reflect upon this as a remote corner of the earth in reſpect of Judea,—its ſituation and inacceſſibleneſs as an iſland,—the little that was then known of navigation,—or carried on of commerce,—

the

the large tract of land which to this day remains unhallowed with the name of Chriſt, and almoſt in the neighbourhood of where the firſt glad tidings of him were ſounded,—one cannot but adore the goodneſs of God, and remark a more particular providence in its conveyance and eſtabliſhment here, than amongſt other nations upon the continent,—where, though the oppoſitions from error and prejudice were equal, it had not theſe natural impediments to encounter.

Hiſtorians and ſtateſmen, who generally ſearch everywhere for the cauſes of events but in the pleaſure of Him who diſpoſes of them, may make different reflections upon this. They may conſider it as a matter incidental, brought to paſs by the fortuitous ambition, ſucceſs, and ſettlement of the Romans here; it appearing that in Claudius's reign, when Chriſtianity began to get footing in Rome, near eighty thouſand of that city and people were fixed in this iſland: as this made a free communication betwixt the two places, the way for the Goſpel was in courſe open, and its tranſition from the one to the other, natural and eaſy to be accounted for,—and yet, nevertheleſs, providential. God often ſuffers us to purſue the devices of our hearts, whilſt he turns the courſe of them, like the rivers of waters, to bountiful purpoſes. Thus, he might make that purſuit of glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to advance his own, and eſtabliſh it here: he might make the wickedneſs of the earth to work his own righteouſneſs, by ſuffering them

to wander a while beyond their proper bounds, till his purpoſes were fulfilled, and "then put "his hook into their noſtrils," and lead thoſe wild beaſts of prey back again into their own land.

Next to this bleſſing of the light of the Goſpel, we muſt not forget that by which it was preſerved from the danger of being totally ſmothered and extinguiſhed, by that vaſt ſwarm of barbarous nations which came down upon us from the north, and ſhook the whole world like a tempeſt; changing names and cuſtoms, and language and government, and almoſt the very face of nature, wherever they fixed. That our religion ſhould be preſerved at all, when every thing elſe ſeemed to periſh which was capable of change;—or, that it ſhould not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of its former beauty and ſtrength,—the whole can be aſcribed to no cauſe ſo likely as this, That the ſame power of God which ſent it forth, was preſent to ſupport it,—when the whole frame of other things gave way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preſerving Chriſtianity from an utter extinction,—we muſt reckon that of being enabled to preſerve and free it from corruptions, which the ruſt of time,—the abuſes of men, and the natural tendency of all things to degeneracy which are truſted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was begun, by how many ſtrange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not

" entirely without ſpot or wrinkle,"—at leaſt, without great blotches or marks of anility!—

Even the blow which was ſuffered to fall upon it ſhortly after, in that period where our hiſtory looks ſo unlike herſelf (ſtain'd, Mary, by thee, and disfigured by blood)—can one reflect upon it, without adoring the providence of God, which ſo ſpeedily ſnatched the ſword of perſecution out of her hand,—making her reign as ſhort as it was mercileſs!

If God then made us, as he did the Iſraelites, ſuck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock,—how much more ſignal was his mercy in giving them to us without money, without price, in thoſe good days which followed, when a long and a wiſe reign was as neceſſary to build up our church, as a ſhort one was before, to ſave it from ruins!—

——The bleſſing was neceſſary,—and it was granted:—

God having multiplied the years of that renowned princeſs to an uncommon number, giving her time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering perſecuted people, and ſettle them upon ſuch a foundation as muſt make them happy;—the touchſtone by which they are to be tried whom God has intruſted with the care of kingdoms.

Bleſſed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that teſt ſo much eaſier for the Britiſh, than other princes of this earth; whoſe ſubjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have ſeldom happened upon that of

changing their miſery; and, it is to be feared, are never likely, ſo long as they are kept ſo ſtrongly bound in chains of darkneſs,—and chains of power.

From both theſe kinds of evils, which are almoſt naturally connected together, How providential was our eſcape in the ſucceeding reign, when all the choice blood was beſpoke, and preparations made, to offer it up at one ſacrifice!

I would not intermix the horrors of that black projected feſtival with the glories of this; or name the ſorrows of the next reign, which ended in the ſubverſion of our conſtitution, was it not neceſſary to purſue the thread of our deliverances through thoſe times, and remark how nigh God's providence was to us in them both,—by protecting us from the one, in as ſignal a manner as he reſtored us from the other.

Indeed, the latter of them might have been a joyleſs matter of remembrance to us at this day, had it not been confirmed a bleſſing by a ſucceeding eſcape, which ſealed and conveyed it ſafe down to us: whether it was to correct an undue ſenſe of former bleſſings,—or to teach us to reflect upon the number and value of them, by threatening us with the deprivation of them,—we were ſuffered, however, to approach the edge of a precipice, where, if God had not raiſed up a deliverer to lead us back, — all had been loſt:— the arts of Jeſuitry had decoyed us forwards;

or,

or, if that had failed, we had been puſh'd down by open force,—and our deſtruction had been inevitable.

The good conſequences of that deliverance are ſuch, that it ſeemed as if God had ſuffered our waters, like thoſe of Betheſda, to be troubled, to make them afterwards more healing to us; ſince to the account of that day's bleſſing, we charge the enjoyment of every thing ſince worth a freeman's living for;—the revival of our liberty, our religion, the juſt rights of our kings,—and the juſt rights of our people; and along with all, that happy proviſion for their continuance, for which we are returning thanks to God this day.

Let us do it, I beſeech you, in the way which becomes wiſe men, by purſuing the intentions of his bleſſings, and making a better uſe of them than our forefathers, who ſometimes ſeem'd to grow weary of their own happineſs:—let us rather thank God for the good land which he has given us; and when we begin to proſper in it, and have built goodly houſes, and dwelt therein,—and when our ſilver and our gold is multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let the inſtances of our virtue and benevolence be multiplied with them, that the great and mighty God, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, may, in the laſt day of accounting with us, judge us worthy of the mercies we have received.

In vain are days ſet apart to celebrate ſucceſsful occurrences, unleſs they influence a

nation's morals:—a ſinful people can never be grateful to God,—nor can they, properly ſpeaking, be loyal to their prince;—they cannot be grateful to the one, becauſe they live not under a ſenſe of his mercies;—nor can they be loyal to the other, becauſe they diſengage the providence of God from taking his part,—and then giving a heart to his adverſaries to be intractable.—

And therefore, what was ſaid by ſome one, That every ſin was a treaſon againſt the ſoul, may be applied here,—That every wicked man is a traitor to his king and country. And, whatever ſtateſmen may write of the cauſes of the riſe and fall of nations;—for the contrary reaſons, a good man will ever be found to be the beſt patriot and the beſt ſubject: and though an individual may ſay, What can my righteouſneſs profit a nation of men? it may be anſwered, That if it ſhould fail of a bleſſing here,—it will have one advantage at leaſt, which is this,—

It will ſave thy own ſoul!—which may God grant. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

THE HISTORY OF JACOB CONSIDERED.

GENESIS XLVI. 9.

And Jacob ſaid unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.—

THERE is not a man in hiſtory whom I pity more than the man who made this reply:—not becauſe his days were ſhort,—but that they were long enough to have crowded into them ſo much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the moſt unhappy: for, 'bating the ſeven years he ſerved Laban for Rachel, "which ſeemed to "him but a few days, for the love he had "to her,"—ſtrike thoſe out of the number,—all his other days were ſorrow; and that not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences, and evil paſſions of others. A large portion of what man is born to, comes, you'll ſay, from the ſame quarter:—'tis true; but ſtill, in ſome mens lives, there ſeems a contexture of miſery:—one evil ſo riſes out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has ſo very melancholy an air, that a good-natured man ſhall not be able to look upon it but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity

I pity this patriarch ſtill the more, becauſe, from his firſt ſetting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of ſuch different ſcenes: he was told by Iſaac, his father, that "God ſhould bleſs him with the "dew of Heaven, and the fatneſs of the "earth, and with plenty of corn and wine; "—that people were to ſerve him, and na- "tions to bow down to him;—that he ſhould "be lord over his brethren;—that bleſſed "was every one that bleſſed him, and curſed "was every one who curſed him."

The ſimplicity of youth takes promiſes of happineſs in the fulleſt latitude;—and as theſe were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padanaran,—it would leave no diſtruſt of their accompliſhments upon his mind;—every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his bleſſing;—he would purſue it;—he would graſp a ſhadow.

This, by the way, makes it neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the bleſſings which were conveyed, had a view to bleſſings not altogether ſuch as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were in a great meaſure ſpiritual, and ſuch as the prophetic ſoul of Iſaac had principally before him, in the comprehenſive idea of their future and happy eſtabliſhment, when they were no longer to be ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth: for in fact, in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe of his father's grant,—Jacob enjoyed it not; and was ſo far from being a happy

happy man, that, in the moſt intereſting paſſages of his life, he met with nothing but diſappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the firſt treacherous hour of a mother's ambition; in conſequence of which, he is driven forth from his country and the protection of his houſe, to ſeek protection and eſtabliſhment in the houſe of Laban his kinſman.

In what manner this anſwered his expectations, we find from his own pathetic remonſtrance to Laban, when he had purſued him ſeven days journey, and overtook him on Mount Gilead.—I ſee him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which Innocence gives the oppreſſed, thus remonſtrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment:—

"Theſe twenty years that I have been "with thee,—thy ewes have not caſt their "young; and the rams of thy flock have I "not eaten. That which was torn of beaſts "I brought not unto thee; I bare the loſs "of it;—what was ſtolen by day, or ſtolen "by night, of my hands didſt thou require "it. Thus I was: in the day the drought "conſumed me, and the froſt by night; "and my ſleep departed from my eyes. "Thus have I been twenty years in thy "houſe:—I ſerved thee fourteen years for "thy two daughters, and ſix years for thy "cattle; and thou haſt changed my wages "ten times."

Scarce

Scarce had he recovered from theſe evils, when the ill conduct and vices of his children wound his ſoul to death.—Reuben proves inceſtuous;—Judah adulterous;—his daughter Dinah is diſhonoured;—Simeon and Levi diſhonour themſelves by treachery;—two of his grandchildren are ſtricken with ſudden death;—Rachel, his beloved wife, periſhes, and in circumſtances which imbitter'd his loſs;—his ſon Joſeph, a moſt promiſing youth, is torn from him by the envy of his brethren;—and, to cloſe all, himſelf driven by famine, in his old age, to die amongſt the Egyptians;—a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him. Unhappy patriarch! well might he ſay, 'That few and evil had been his 'days:' the anſwer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's inquiry, which was ſimply his age:—but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the ſorrows which thoſe days had brought along with them? all that was more in the anſwer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afreſh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Unwillingly does the mind digeſt the evils prepared for it by others;—for thoſe we prepare ourſelves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered:—a ſhattered fortune,—a ſhattered frame, ſo we have but the ſatisfaction of ſhattering them ourſelves,

paſs

paſs naturally enough into the habit, and by the eaſe with which they are both done, they ſave the ſpectator a world of pity: but for thoſe like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,—the avarice of a parent,—the unkindneſs of a relation,—the ingratitude of a child,—they are evils which leave a ſcar;—beſides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any,—every looker on has an intereſt in the tragedy;—but then we are apt to intereſt ourſelves no otherwiſe than merely as the incidents themſelves ſtrike our paſſions, without carrying the leſſon further.—In a word,—we realize nothing:—we ſigh,—we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the ſtory of Miſery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,—parental partiality,—or parental injuſtice,—it matters not by what title it ſtands diſtinguiſhed,—'tis that by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Eſau's breaſt,—and an eternal terror with it in her own, leſt ſhe ſhould live to be deprived of them both in one day:—and truſt me, dear Chriſtians, wherever that equal balance of kindneſs and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained, there will daggers ever be planted; "the ſon ſhall [*literally*] be ſet "at variance againſt his father, and the "daughter againſt her mother, and the "daughter-

" daughter-in-law againſt her mother-in-law;
" —and a man's foes ſhall be they of his
" own houſehold."

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domeſtic policy as of equity, which Moſes gave upon this head, in the 21ſt of Deuteronomy.

" If a man have two wives, one beloved
" and one hated, and they have born him
" children, both the beloved and the hated;
" and if the firſt-born ſon be hers that was
" hated, then it ſhall be, when he maketh
" his ſons to inherit that which he hath,
" that he may not make the ſon of the
" beloved firſt-born, before the ſon of the
" hated which is indeed the firſt-born;—
" but he ſhall acknowledge the ſon of the
" hated for firſt-born, by giving him a double
" portion of all that he hath." The evil was well fenced againſt;—for 'tis one of thoſe which ſteals in upon the heart with the affections, and courts the parent under ſo ſweet a form, that thouſands have been betrayed by the very virtues which ſhould have preſerved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the ſide of affection;—but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, ſhe pleads for every child alike;—and, why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon ſays, " Oppreſſion will make a wiſe man mad."—What will it do then to a tender and ingenuous heart which feels itſelf neglected,—too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs to complain?—

See,

See, it ſits down in ſilence, robbed by diſcouragements of all its natural powers to pleaſe,—born to ſee others loaded with careſſes;—in ſome uncheery corner it nouriſhes its diſcontent,—and with a weight upon its ſpirits, which its little ſtock of fortitude is not able to withſtand,—it droops and pines away.—Sad Victim of Caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his ſon Joſeph, which no way correſponded with the leſſon of wiſdom which the miſeries of his own family might have taught him,—ſurely his eyes had ſeen ſorrow ſufficient on that ſcore, to have taken warning; and yet we find, that he fell into the ſame ſnare of partiality to that child in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had ſhewn to him in hers:—"for Iſrael loved Joſeph "more than all his children, becauſe he "was the ſon of his old age; and he made "him a coat of many colours."—O Iſrael! where was that prophetic ſpirit which darted itſelf into future times, and told each tribe what was to be its fate?—Where was it fled, that it could not aid thee to look ſo little a way forwards, as to behold "this "coat of many colours" ſtained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguiſh hid from thy eyes?—and, Why is every thing?—but that it pleaſes Heaven to give us no more light in our way than will leave virtue in poſſeſſion of its recompence.—

—Grant

—Grant me, gracious God, to go cheerfully on the road which thou haſt marked out!—I wiſh it neither more wide nor more ſmooth:—continue the light of this dim taper thou haſt put into my hands:—I will kneel upon the ground ſeven times a day, to ſeek the beſt track I can with it;—and having done that, I will truſt myſelf and the iſſue of my journey to thee, who art the Fountain of joy,—and will ſing ſongs of comfort as I go along!

Let us proceed to the ſecond great occurrence in the patriarch's life,—The impoſition of a wife upon him, which he neither bargain'd for nor loved.—"And it came to paſs "in the morning, behold it was Leah! And "he ſaid unto Laban, What is this that thou "haſt done unto me? Did I not ſerve thee "for Rachel? Wherefore then haſt thou "beguiled me?"

This, indeed, is out of the ſyſtem of all conjugal impoſitions now,—but the moral of it is ſtill good: and the abuſe, with the ſame complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, ſo long as Art and Artifice are ſo buſy as they are in theſe affairs.

Liſten, I pray you, to the ſtories of the diſappointed in marriage!—collect all their complaints:—hear their mutual reproaches; Upon what fatal hinge do the greateſt part of them turn?—'They were miſtaken in the 'perſon.'—Some diſguiſe, either of body or mind, is ſeen through in the firſt domeſtic ſcuffle;—ſome fair ornament,—perhaps the very

very one that won the heart;—"the orna-
"ment of a meek and quiet ſpirit," falls off.
—"It is not the Rachel for whom I have
"ſerved;—Why haſt thou then beguiled
"me!"

Be open,—be honeſt:—give yourſelf for what you are; conceal nothing,—varniſh nothing;—and if theſe fair weapons will not do,—better not conquer at all than conquer for a day.—When the night is paſſed, 'twill ever be the ſame ſtory:—"And it came to "paſs, behold it was Leah!"

If the heart beguiles itſelf in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of fleſh and blood,—when the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether 'tis Rachel or Leah;—be the object what it will, as it muſt be on the earthly ſide, at leaſt of perfection,—it will fall ſhort of the work of fancy, whoſe exiſtence is in the clouds.

In ſuch caſes of deception, let no man exclaim as Jacob does in his,—"What is it thou "haſt done unto me?"—for 'tis his own doings; and he has nothing to lay his fault on but the heat and poetic indiſcretion of his own paſſions.

I know not whether 'tis of any uſe to take notice of this ſingularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Iſaac, when the infirmities of old age had diſabled him from diſtinguiſhing one child from another:—"Art

"thou my very ſon Eſau? And he ſaid, I "am." 'Tis doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the ſame teſt; but both ſuffered from a ſimilitude of ſtratagem; and 'tis hard to ſay, whether the anguiſh, from croſs'd love, in the breaſt of one brother, might not be as ſore a puniſhment as the diſquietudes of croſs'd ambition and revenge in the breaſt of the other.

I do not ſee which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin;—or, why a man ſhould fall into that very pit (and no other) which he has "graven and digged for another man." Time and chance may bring ſuch incidents about; and there wants nothing, but that Jacob ſhould have been a bad man to have made this a common-place text for ſuch a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the beſt way to eſcape evil is, in general, not to commit it ourſelves;—and that whenever the paſſions of mankind will order it otherwiſe, to rob thoſe, at leaſt, "who love judgment," of the triumph of finding it out,—'That our tra-'vail has returned upon our heads, and our 'violent dealings upon our own pates.'

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without returning firſt to the part with which it ſet out;—the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt of the ſhortneſs and miſery of his days.—Give me leave to bring this home to us, by a ſingle reflection upon each.

There is ſomething ſtrange in it, that life ſhould appear ſo ſhort *in the groſs*,—and yet

yet ſo long *in the detail.* Miſery may make it ſo, you'll ſay,—but we will exclude it;—and ſtill you'll find, though we all complain of the ſhortneſs of life, what numbers there are who ſeem quite overſtocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually ſending out into the highways and ſtreets of the city, to compel gueſts to come in, and take it off their hands; to do this with ingenuity and forecaſt, is not one of the leaſt arts and buſineſſes of life itſelf; and they who cannot ſucceed in it, carry as many marks of diſtreſs about them as Bankruptcy herſelf could wear. Be as careleſs as we may, we ſhall not always have the power;—nor ſhall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood is cool'd, and the ſpirits, which have hurried us on through half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire,—then Wiſdom will preſs a moment to be heard;—afflictions, or a bed of ſickneſs will find their hours of perſuaſion;—and, ſhould they fail, there is ſomething yet behind:—Old Age will overtake us at the laſt, and with its trembling hand hold up the glaſs to us as it did to the patriarch.

—Dear inconſiderate Chriſtians, wait not, I beſeech you, till then;—take a view of your life now:—look back,—behold this fair ſpace capable of ſuch heavenly improvements,—all ſcrawl'd over and defaced with——I want words to ſay with what,—for I think only of the reflections with which you are to ſupport

yourſelves in the decline of a life ſo miſerably caſt away,—ſhould it happen, as it often does, that ye have ſtood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the work of the day to perform when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly. As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage,—ſpeculation and fact appear at variance again.—We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miſerable; and yet the world looks happy enough,—and every thing tolerably at its eaſe. It muſt be noted indeed, that the patriarch, in this account, ſpeaks merely his preſent feelings; and ſeems rather to be giving a hiſtory of his ſufferings than a ſyſtem of them, in contradiction to that of the God of Love. Look upon the world he has given us!—obſerve the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to ſatisfy the deſires of the temperate,—but of the fanciful and wanton!—every place is almoſt a paradiſe, planted when Nature was in her gayeſt humour!

—Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one ſection of the globe;—and this repreſentation another.—Truth lieth betwixt,—or rather, good and evil are mixed up together; which of the two preponderates, is beyond our enquiry;—but, I truſt,—it is the good.—Firſt, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to us;—and, ſecondly, Becauſe I will not ſuppoſe that a work intended to exalt

exalt his glory, ſhould ſtand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of miſery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increaſe the complaint,—or to affect the praiſe which the Jeſuits' college of Granada gave their Sanchez:—That though he lived where there was a very ſweet garden, yet was never ſeen to touch a flower; and that he would rather die than eat ſalt or pepper, or aught that might give a reliſh to his meat.

I pity the men, whoſe natural pleaſures are burdens, and who fly from Joy (as theſe ſplenetic and moroſe ſouls do) as if it was really an evil in itſelf.

If there is an evil in this world, 'tis ſorrow and heavineſs of heart.—The loſs of goods,—of health,—of coronets and mitres, are only evil as they occaſion ſorrow;—take that out,—the reſt is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the cauſes of anguiſh in the heart were not enow,—but he muſt fill up the meaſure with thoſe of caprice; and not only walk in a vain ſhadow,—but diſquiet himſelf in vain too!

We are a reſtleſs ſet of beings; and as we are likely to continue ſo to the end of the world,—the beſt we can do in it is, to make the ſame uſe of this part of our character which wiſe men do of other bad propenſities;—when they find they cannot conquer them,

—they endeavour, at leaſt, to divert them into good channels.

If, therefore, we muſt be a ſolicitous race of ſelf-tormentors,—let us drop the common objects which make us ſo,—and, for God's ſake, be ſolicitous only to live well!

SERMON XXIII.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS CONSIDERED.

LUKE XVI. 31.

And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one ſhould riſe from the dead.

THESE words are the concluſion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; the deſign of which was, to ſhew us the neceſſity of conducting ourſelves, by ſuch lights as God had been pleaſed to give us: the ſenſe and meaning of the patriarch's final determination in the text being this, That they who will not be perſuaded to anſwer the great purpoſes of their being, upon ſuch arguments as are offered to them in Scripture, will never be perſuaded to it by any other means, how extraordinary ſoever;—"If they hear not "Moſes and the prophets, neither will they "be perſuaded though one ſhould riſe from "the dead."

——Riſe from the dead! To what purpoſe? What could ſuch a meſſenger propoſe or urge, which had not been propoſed and urged already? The novelty or ſurpriſe of ſuch a viſit, might awaken the attention of a curious unthinking people, who ſpent their time in nothing elſe but to hear and tell ſome new thing; but ere the wonder was well over,

ſome new wonder would ſtart up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead, from whence he came, and not a ſoul make one inquiry about him.

—This, I fear, would be the concluſion of the affair. But to bring this matter ſtill cloſer to us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that God, in compliance with a curious world,—or from a better motive,—in compaſſion to a ſinful one, ſhould vouchſafe to ſend one from the dead, to call home our conſcience and make us better Chriſtians, better citizens, better men, and better ſervants to God than we are.

Now bear with me, I beſeech you, in framing ſuch an addreſs as, I imagine, would be moſt likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to ſay: the great channel to it is intereſt;—and there he would ſet out.

He might tell us (after the moſt indiſputable credentials of whom he ſerved) That he was come a meſſenger from the great God of Heaven, with reiterated propoſals, whereby much was to be granted us on his ſide,—and ſomething to be parted with on ours: but that, not to alarm us,—'twas neither houſes, nor land, nor poſſeſſions;—'twas neither wives, nor children, nor brethren, nor ſiſters, which we had to forſake;—no one rational pleaſure to be given up;—no natural endearment to be torn from,——

In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing to part with,—but what was not for our

intereſts to keep,—and that was our vices; which brought death and miſery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thouſand arguments, that to be temperate and chaſte, and juſt and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one another,—was only doing that for CHRIST's ſake, which was moſt for our own: and that, were we in a capacity of capitulating with God, upon what terms we would ſubmit to his government;—he would convince us, 'twould be impoſſible for the wit of man to frame any propoſals more for our preſent intereſts, than "to lead an un-"corrupted life,—to do the thing which is "lawful and right," and lay ſuch reſtraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature and the refinement of human happineſs.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from intereſt got over,—the ſpectre might addreſs himſelf to the other paſſions.—In doing this, he could but give us the moſt engaging ideas of the perfections of God;—nor could he do more than impreſs the moſt awful ones of his majeſty and power:—he might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, haſtening to the place from whence we ſhall not return;—that during our ſtay we ſtood accountable to this Being, who, though rich in mercies,—yet was terrible in his judgments;—that he took notice of all our actions,—that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and ſpied out all our ways; and was ſo pure in his nature, that he would

would puniſh even the wicked imaginations of the heart; and had appointed a day wherein he would enter into this inquiry.

He might add,——

But what?—with all the eloquence of an inſpired tongue, What could he add or ſay to us, which has not been ſaid before? The experiment has been tried a thouſand times upon the hopes and fears, the reaſons and paſſions of men, by all the powers of nature:—the applications of which have been ſo great, and the variety of addreſſes ſo unanſwerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world than that ſo great a religion ſhould be no better recommended by its profeſſors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in a humour to be convinced;—and ſo long as the pre-engagement with our paſſion ſubſiſts, it is not argumentation which can do the buſineſs;—we may amuſe ourſelves with the ceremony of the operation, but we reaſon not with the proper faculty, when we ſee every thing in the ſhape and colouring in which the treachery of the ſenſes paints it: and indeed, were we only to look into the world, and obſerve how inclinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it,—one would think, at firſt ſight, they believed that all diſcourſes of religion and virtue were mere matters of ſpeculation for men to entertain ſome idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we ſeemed to be agreed in no one thing but ſpeaking well.

and acting ill. But the trueſt comment is in the text;—" If they hear not Moſes and " the prophets," &c.

If they are not brought over to the intereſts of religion upon ſuch diſcoveries as God has made,—or has enabled them to make, they will ſtand out againſt all evidence:—in vain ſhall one riſe for their conviction;—was the earth to give up her dead,—'twould be the ſame;—every man would return again to his courſe, and the ſame bad paſſions would produce the ſame bad actions to the end of the world.

This is the principal leſſon of the parable; but I muſt enlarge upon the whole of it,—becauſe it has ſome other uſeful leſſons; and they will beſt preſent themſelves to us as we go along.

In this parable, which is one of the moſt remarkable in the Goſpel, our Saviour repreſents a ſcene, in which, by a kind of contraſt, two of the moſt oppoſite conditions that could be brought together from human life, are paſs'd before our imaginations.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the higheſt pinnacle of proſperity,—to riches,—to happineſs;—I ſay *happineſs*,—in compliance with the world, and on a ſuppoſition that the poſſeſſion of riches muſt make us happy, when the very purſuit of them ſo warms our imaginations, that we ſtake both body and ſoul upon the event; as if they were things not to be purchaſed at too dear a rate. They are

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the wages of wiſdom,—as well as of folly.—Whatever was the caſe here, is beyond the purport of the parable;—the Scripture is ſilent, and ſo ſhould we; it marks only his outward condition, by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite:—to gratify the one, he was clothed in purple and fine linen; to ſatisfy the other, fared ſumptuouſly every day;—and upon every thing too, we'll ſuppoſe, that climates could furniſh,—that luxury could invent,—or the hand of Science could torture.

Cloſe by his gates is repreſented an object, whom Providence might ſeem to have placed there to cure the pride of man, and ſhew him to what wretchedneſs his condition might be brought: a creature in all the ſhipwreck of nature;—helpleſs,—undone,—in want of friends,—in want of health,—and in want of every thing with them which his diſtreſſes called for.

In this ſtate he is deſcribed as deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; and though the caſe is not expreſsly put, that he was refuſed, yet, as the contrary is not affirmed in the hiſtorical part of the parable,—or pleaded after by the other, that he ſhewed mercy to the miſerable,—we may conclude his requeſt was unſucceſsful;—like too many others in the world, either ſo high lifted up in it, that they cannot look down diſtinctly enough upon the ſufferings of their fellow-

fellow-creatures,—or, by long ſurfeiting in a continual courſe of banqueting and good cheer, they forget there is ſuch a diſtemper as hunger in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps a thouſand unpitied wants in a pilgrimage through an inhoſpitable world,—the poor man ſinks ſilently under his burden.—But, good God! whence is this? Why doſt thou ſuffer theſe hardſhips in a world which thou haſt made? Is it for thy honour that one man ſhould eat the bread of fulneſs, and ſo many of his own ſtock and lineage eat the bread of ſorrow?—That this man ſhould go clad in purple, and have all his paths ſtrewed with roſe-buds of delight, whilſt ſo many mournful paſſengers go heavily along, and paſs by his gates, hanging down their heads? Is it for thy glory, O God, that ſo large a ſhade of miſery ſhould be ſpread acroſs thy works?—or, is it that we ſee but a part of them?—When the great chain at length is let down, and all that has held the two worlds in harmony is ſeen;—when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the diſtreſsful incidents of this drama ſhall be unravelled;—when every man's caſe ſhall be reconſidered,—then wilt thou be fully juſtified in all thy ways, and every mouth ſhall be ſtopped.

After a long day of mercy miſ-ſpent in riot and uncharitableneſs, the rich man died alſo:

alſo:—the parable adds,—and was buried:—buried no doubt in triumph, with all the ill-timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to proſtitute upon thoſe occaſions.

But this was the laſt vain ſhow; the utter concluſion of all his epicurean grandeur:—the next is a ſcene of horror, where he is repreſented by our Saviour in a ſtate of the utmoſt miſery, from whence he is ſuppoſed to lift up his eyes towards Heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.—"And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that "thou in thy lifetime receivedſt thy good "things."

——That he had received his good things,—'twas from Heaven,—and could be no reproach. With what ſeverity ſoever the Scripture ſpeaks againſt riches, it does not appear that the living or faring ſumptuouſly every day was the crime objected to the rich man; or that it is a real part of a vicious character: the caſe might be then as now; his quality and ſtation in the world might be ſuppoſed to be ſuch, as not only to have juſtified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it, without any imputation of doing wrong;—for differences of ſtations there muſt be in the world,—which muſt be ſupported by ſuch marks of diſtinction as cuſtom impoſes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence in which Solomon is deſcribed to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the paſtures,

paſtures, and a hundred ſheep, beſides harts and roe-bucks, and fallow-deer and fatted fowl, with thirty meaſures of fine flour, and threeſcore meaſures of meal, for the daily proviſion of his table;—all this is not laid to him as a ſin, but rather remarked as an inſtance of God's bleſſing to him;—and whenever theſe things are otherwiſe, 'tis from a waſteful and diſhoneſt perverſion of them to pernicious ends,—and oft-times, to the very oppoſite ones for which they were granted, —to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.—

And this ſeems to have been the ſnare the rich man had fallen into;—and poſſibly, had he fared leſs ſumptuouſly,—he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better diſpoſed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compaſſion for it.

"And Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that "thou in thy lifetime receivedſt thy good "things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things." —Remember! ſad ſubject of recollection! that a man has paſſed through this world with all the bleſſings and advantages of it on his ſide,—favoured by God Almighty with riches,—befriended by his fellow-creatures in the means of acquiring them,—aſſiſted every hour by the ſociety of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them, —to remember how much he has received, —how little he has beſtowed!—that he has been no man's friend!—no one's protector! —no one's benefactor! —bleſſed God!

Thus

Thus begging in vain for himſelf, he is repreſented at laſt as interceding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be ſent to them to give them warning, and ſave them from the ruin which he had fallen into;—"They have Moſes and the prophets," was the anſwer of the patriarch;—"let them "hear them;" but the unhappy man is repreſented as diſcontented with it, and ſtill perſiſting in his requeſt, and urging,—"Nay, "father Abraham, but if one went from the "dead, they would repent."

—He thought ſo;—but Abraham knew otherwiſe;—and the grounds of the determination I have explained already;—ſo ſhall proceed to draw ſome other concluſions and leſſons from the parable.

And firſt, our Saviour might further intend to diſcover to us by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expoſe mankind; agreeably to what is elſewhere declared, how hardly ſhall they who have them enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a bleſſing for God to truſt us with, or we to manage: they ſurround us at all times with eaſe, with nonſenſe, with flattery, and falſe friends, with which thouſands and ten thouſands have periſhed:—they are apt to multiply our faults, and treacherouſly to conceal them from us;—they hourly adminiſter to our temptations; and neither allow us time to examine our faults, nor humility to repent of them.—Nay, what is ſtrange, do they not

often tempt men even to covetouſneſs! and tho' amidſt all the ill offices which riches do us, one would leaſt ſuſpect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other,—yet, ſo it is, that many a man contracts his ſpirits upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But there is leſs need to preach againſt this. We ſeem all to be haſtening to the oppoſite extreme of luxury and expence: we generally content ourſelves with the ſolution of it; and ſay, 'Tis a natural conſequence of trade and riches;—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a miſtake in the account; and that it is not riches which are the cauſe of luxury,—but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honour, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good; which goads ſo many thouſands on with an affectation of poſſeſſing more than they have;—and, conſequently, of engaging in a ſyſtem of expences they cannot ſupport.

In one word, 'tis the neceſſity of *appearing* to be ſomebody, in order to be ſo,—which ruins the world.

This leads us to another leſſon in the parable, concerning the true uſe and application of riches: we may be ſure, from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ thoſe talents as God intended.

How God did intend them,—may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inſcription you ſhall read there,—as

from any chapter and verſe I might cite upon the ſubject. Let us then for a moment, my dear auditors, turn our eyes that way, and conſider the traces which even the moſt inſenſible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive ſpringing up within him from ſome caſual act of generoſity; and though this is a pleaſure which properly belongs to the good, yet let him try the experiment;—let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight ariſing in the mind from the conſcience of a humane action.

But to know it right, we muſt call upon the compaſſionate.—Cruelty gives evidence unwillingly, and feels the pleaſure but imperfectly; for this, like all other pleaſures, is of a relative nature, and conſequently the enjoyment of it requires ſome qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does. There muſt be ſomething antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper which will render that good,—a good to that individual,—otherwiſe, though 'tis true it may be poſſeſſed,—yet it never can be enjoyed.

Conſider how difficult you will find it, to convince a miſerable heart that any thing is good which is not profitable! or a libertine one, that any thing is bad which is pleaſant!

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modell'd both mind and body to no other happineſs but good eating and drinking,—bid him

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"taſte and ſee how good God is,"—there is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word, a man's mind muſt be like your propoſition before it can be reliſhed;—and 'tis the reſemblance between them which brings over his judgement, and makes him an evidence on your ſide.

'Tis therefore not to the cruel,—'tis to the merciful;—to thoſe who rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,—that we make this appeal.—'Tis to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am now to tell the ſad * ſtory of the fatherleſs, and of him who hath no helper, and beſpeak your almſgiving in behalf of thoſe who know not how to aſk for it themſelves.

—What can I ſay more?—It is a ſubject on which I cannot inform your judgement;—and, in ſuch an audience, I would not preſume to practiſe upon your paſſions:—let it ſuffice to ſay, That they whom God hath bleſſed with the means,—and for whom he has done more, in bleſſing them likewiſe with a diſpoſition,—have abundant reaſon to be thankful to him, as the Author of every good gift, for the meaſure he hath beſtowed to them of both. 'Tis the refuge againſt the ſtormy wind and tempeſt, which he has planted in our hearts; and the conſtant fluctuation of every thing in this world, forces all the ſons and daughters of Adam to ſeek ſhel-

* Charity-ſermon at St. Andrew's, Holborn.

ter under it by turns. Guard it by entails, and ſettlements as we will, the moſt affluent plenty may be ſtripp'd, and find all its worldly comforts, like ſo many withered leaves dropping from us!—The crowns of princes may be ſhaken; and the greateſt that ever awed the world have looked back and moralized upon the turn of the wheel!

That which has happened to one,—may happen to every man: and therefore that excellent rule of our Saviour, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing elſe, ſhould govern us;—"That whatſoever ye would that "men ſhould do to you, do ye alſo unto "them."

Haſt thou ever lain upon the bed of languiſhing? or laboured under a diſtemper which threatened thy life?—Call to mind thy ſorrowful and penſive ſpirit at that time, and ſay, What it was that made the thoughts of death ſo bitter!—If thou hadſt children,—I affirm it, the bitterneſs of death lay there!—If unbrought up, and unprovided for, What will become of them? Where will they find a friend when I am gone? Who will ſtand up for them, and plead their cauſe againſt the wicked?

—Bleſſed God! to thee, who art a Father to the fatherleſs, and a Huſband to the widow,—I intruſt them!

Haſt thou ever ſuſtained any conſiderable ſhock in thy fortune? or, Has the ſcantineſs of thy condition hurried thee into great ſtraits, and brought thee almoſt to diſtraction? Conſider,

ſider, who was it that ſpread a table in that wilderneſs of thought?—who made thy cup to overflow? Was it not a friend of conſolation who ſtepped in,—ſaw thee embarraſſed with the tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares,—took them under his protection?—(Heaven! thou wilt reward him for it!)—and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehenſions of a parent's love?

—Haſt thou?—

—But how ſhall I aſk a queſtion which muſt bring tears into ſo many eyes?—Haſt thou ever been wounded in a more affecting manner ſtill, by the loſs of a moſt obliging friend?—or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promiſing child by the ſtroke of death?—Bitter remembrance! Nature droops at it;—but Nature is the ſame in all conditions and lots of life.—A child thruſt forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment, bereft of inſtruction, and the means of its ſalvation, is a ſubject of more tender heart-aches and will awaken every power of Nature!—As we have felt for ourſelves,—let us feel, for Chriſt's ſake,—let us feel for theirs; and may the God of all comfort bleſs you! Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

PRIDE.

LUKE, XIV. 10, 11.

But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room, that when he that bad thee cometh, he may ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of them who ſit at meat with thee:—for whoſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.

IT is an exhortation of our Saviour's to Humility, addreſſed by way of inference from what he had ſaid in the three foregoing verſes of the chapter: where, upon entering into the houſe of one of the chief Phariſees to eat bread, and marking how ſmall a portion of this neceſſary virtue entered in with the ſeveral gueſts, diſcovering itſelf from their chooſing the chief rooms, and moſt diſtinguiſhed places of honour;—he takes the occaſion which ſuch a behaviour offered, to caution them againſt Pride;—ſtates the inconvenience of the paſſion;—ſhews the diſappointments which attend it;—the diſgrace in which it generally ends; in being forced at laſt to recede from the pretenſions to what is more than our due; which, by the way, is the very thing the paſſion is eternally prompting us to expect. When, therefore, thou art bidden to a wedding, ſays our Saviour, ſit not down in the higheſt room, leſt a more honourable man than thou

thou be bidden of him; and he that bad thee and him, come and ſay to thee,—Give this man place: and thou begin with ſhame to take the loweſt room.

—But thou, when thou art bidden, go and ſit down in the loweſt room:—hard lecture! —In the loweſt room?—What,—do I owe nothing to myſelf? Muſt I forget my ſtation, my character in life? Reſign the precedence which my birth, my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in poſſeſſion of;—give all up! and ſuffer inferiors to take my honours? Yes;—for that, ſays our Saviour, is the road to it: "For when he that bad thee cometh, he "will ſay to thee, Friend, go up higher; then "ſhalt thou have worſhip in the preſence of "them that ſit at meat with thee:—for who- "ſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and "he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted."

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not neceſſary we ſhould look beyond this life, and ſay, That in that day of retribution, wherein every high thing ſhall be brought low, and every irregular paſſion dealt with as it deſerves;—that pride, amongſt the reſt (conſidered as a vicious character), ſhall meet with its proper puniſhment of being abaſed, and lying down for ever in ſhame and diſhonour.—It is not neceſſary we ſhould look ſo far forwards for the accompliſhment of this: the words ſeem not ſo much to imply the threat of a diſtant puniſhment, the execution of which was to be reſpited to that day;—as the declaration of a plain truth depending

upon the natural courſe of things, and evidently verified in every hour's commerce of the world; from whence, as well as from our reaſoning upon the point, it is found, That Pride lays us open to ſo many mortifying encounters, which Humility in its own nature reſts ſecure from,—that verily, each of them, in this world, have their reward faithfully dealt out by the natural workings of men's paſſions; which, though very bad executioners in general, yet are ſo far juſt ones in this, that they ſeldom ſuffer the exultations of an inſolent temper to eſcape the abaſement, or the deportment of a humble one to fail of the honour, which each of their characters do deſerve.

In other vicious exceſſes which a man commits, the world (though it is not much to its credit) ſeems to ſtand pretty neuter: if you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greateſt enemy to yourſelf,—or if an enemy to the public, at leaſt, you are ſo remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himſelf immediately concerned in your puniſhment: but in the inſtances of Pride, the attack is perſonal: for as this paſſion can only take its riſe from a ſecret compariſon which the party has been making of himſelf to my diſadvantage, every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is ſo far a direct injury, either as it withholds the reſpect which is my due,—or perhaps denies me to have any; or elſe, which preſſes equally hard, as it puts me in

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mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conſcious, and conſequently think myſelf the leſs deſerving of an admonition: in every one of which caſes, the proud man, in whatever language he ſpeaks it,—if it is expreſſive of this ſuperiority over me, either in the gifts of fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean eſtimation, and poſſibly a very unfair one, of the like pretenſions in myſelf,—the attack, I ſay, is perſonal; and has generally the fate to be felt and reſented as ſuch.

So that with regard to the preſent inconveniences, there is ſcarce any vice, bating ſuch as are immediately puniſhed by laws, which a man may not indulge with more ſafety to himſelf, than this one of Pride;—the humbleſt of men not being ſo entirely void of the paſſion themſelves, but that they ſuffer ſo much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accompliſhment of the text a common intereſt and concern: in which they are generally ſucceſsful,—the nature of the vice being ſuch, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occaſions itſelf of its own humiliation.

The proud man,—ſee!—he is ſore all over; touch him—you put him to pain: and though of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all ſenſe and feeling, yet is poſſeſſed with ſo nice and exquiſite a one himſelf, that the ſlights, the little neglects and inſtances of diſeſteem, which would be ſcarce felt by another

another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft-times piercing him to his very heart.

I would not therefore be a proud man was it only for this, that it ſhould not be in the power of every one who thought fit—to chaſtiſe me;—my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at leaſt will not incommode me:—ſo little diſcountenance do I ſee given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I ſuffer by them:—but here—if I exalt myſelf, I have no proſpect of eſcaping;—with this vice I ſtand ſwoln up in every body's way, and muſt unavoidably be thruſt back: whichever way I turn, whatever ſtep I take under the direction of this paſſion, I preſs unkindly upon ſome one, and in return, muſt prepare myſelf for ſuch mortifying repulſes, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way ſorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life as far back as Solomon, whoſe obſervation upon it was the ſame,—and it will ever hold good, "that before "honour was humility, and a haughty ſpirit "before a fall.—Put not therefore thyſelf forth "in the preſence of the king, and ſtand not in "the place of great men:—for better is it—"(which by the way is the very diſſuaſive in "the text)—better is it, that it be ſaid unto "thee, Friend, come up higher, than that "thou ſhouldeſt be put lower in the preſence "of the prince whom thine eyes have ſeen."

Thus much for the illuſtration of this one argument of our Saviour's, againſt Pride:—

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there are many other conſiderations which expoſe the weakneſs of it, which his knowledge of the heart of man might have ſuggeſted; but as the particular occaſion which gave riſe to this lecture of our Saviour's againſt Pride naturally led him to ſpeak of the mortifications which attend ſuch inſtances of it, as he then beheld:—for this reaſon the other arguments might be omitted, which perhaps in a ſet diſcourſe would be doing injuſtice to the ſubject. I ſhall therefore, in the remaining part of this, beg leave to offer ſome other conſiderations of a moral as well as a religious nature upon this ſubject, as ſo many inducements to check this weak paſſion in man; which, though one of the moſt inconvenient of his infirmities,—the moſt painful and diſcourteous to ſociety, yet, by a ſad fatality, ſo it is, that there are few vices, except ſuch whoſe temptations are immediately ſeated in our natures, to which there is ſo general a propenſity throughout the whole race.

This had led ſome ſatirical pens to write, That all mankind at the bottom were proud alike;—that one man differed from another, not ſo much in the different portions which he poſſeſſed of it, as in the different art and addreſs by which he excels in the management and diſguiſe of it to the world: we trample, no doubt, too often, upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet on the whole, the remark has more ſpleen than truth in it; there being thouſands

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(if any evidence is to be allowed) of the moſt unaffected humility, and trueſt poverty of ſpirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithſtanding this, ſo much may be allowed to the obſervation, That Pride is a vice which grows up in ſociety ſo inſenſibly;—ſteals in unobſerved upon the heart upon ſo many occaſions;—forms itſelf upon ſuch ſtrange pretenſions, and when it has done, veils itſelf under ſuch a variety of unſuſpected appearances,—ſometimes even under that of Humility itſelf;—in all which caſes, Self-love, like a falſe friend, inſtead of checking, moſt treacherouſly feeds this humour, points out ſome excellence in every ſoul to make him vain, and think more highly of himſelf, than he ought to think;—that, upon the whole, there is no one weakneſs into which the heart of man is more eaſily betray'd—or which requires greater helps of good ſenſe and good principles to guard againſt.

And firſt, the root from which it ſprings is no inconſiderable diſcredit to the fruit.

If you look into the beſt moral writers, who have taken pains to ſearch into the grounds of this paſſion,—they will tell you, that Pride is the vice of little and contracted ſouls;—that whatever affectation of greatneſs it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanneſs in the heart of it:—a haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer a-kin than they will acknowledge;—like *poor* relations, they look a little

a little ſhy at one another at firſt ſight, but trace back their pedigree, they are but collateral branches from the ſame ſtem; and there is ſcarce any one who has not ſeen many ſuch inſtances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable ſtroke he has given of this affinity, in his deſcription of a "Pride which licks the duſt."

As it has *meanneſs* at the bottom of it,—ſo it is juſtly charged with having *weakneſs* there too, of which it gives the ſtrongeſt proof in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the abſurd means it takes to bring it about.

Conſider a moment,—What is it the proud man aims at?—why,—ſuch a meaſure of reſpect and deference as is due to his ſuperior merit, &c. &c.

Now, good ſenſe and a knowledge of the world ſhew us, that how much ſoever of theſe are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation,—they are ſtill dues of ſuch a nature, that they are not to be inſiſted upon: Honour and Reſpect muſt be a "Free-will offering:" treat them otherwiſe, and claim them from the world as a tax,—they are ſure to be withheld; the firſt diſcovery of ſuch an expectation diſappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this ſpeculative argument of its weakneſs, it has generally the ill fate to add another of a more ſubſtantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no leſs a mark of a *weak brain* in the figur-

ative, than it is in the literal ſenſe of the expreſſion—in ſober truth, 'tis but a ſcurvy kind of a trick *(quoties voluit Fortuna jocari)*—when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil with this paſſion in his head, and mounts him up all at once as high as ſhe can get him,—for it is ſure to make him play ſuch phantaſtic tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how Spleen could be pacified during the repreſentation.

A third argument againſt Pride is the natural connection it has with vices of an unſocial aſpect: the Scripture ſeldom introduces it alone—Anger, or Strife, or Revenge, or ſome inimical paſſion, is ever upon the ſtage with it; the proofs and reaſons of which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefore ſhall ſay no more upon this argument than this,—that was there no other,—yet the bad company this vice is generally found in, would be ſufficient by itſelf to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral conſiderations upon this ſubject; a great part of which, as they illuſtrate chiefly the inconveniences of Pride in a ſocial light, may ſeem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the paſſion itſelf, and root it out of their nature: to do this effectually, we muſt add the arguments of religion, without which, the beſt moral diſcourſe may prove little better than a cold

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political lecture, taught merely to govern the paſſion ſo, as not to be injurious to a man's preſent intereſt or quiet; all which a man may learn to practiſe well enough, and yet at the ſame time be a perfect ſtranger to the beſt part of humility, which implies not a concealment of Pride, but an abſolute conqueſt over the firſt riſings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And, firſt, one of the moſt perſuaſive arguments which religion offers to this end is that which riſes from the ſtate and condition of ourſelves, both as to our natural and moral imperfections. It is impoſſible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart full of the humble exclamation, "O God! what "is man!—even a thing of nought;"—a poor, infirm, miſerable, ſhort-lived creature, that paſſes away like a ſhadow, and is haſtening off the ſtage where the theatrical titles and diſtinctions, and the whole maſk of Pride which he has worn for a day will fall off, and leave him naked as a neglected ſlave. Send forth your imagination, I beſeech you, to view the laſt ſcene of the greateſt and proudeſt who ever awed and governed the world—ſee the empty vapour diſappearing! one of the arrows of mortality this moment ſticks faſt within him: ſee,—it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and ſpirits.

—Approach his bed of ſtate,—lift up the curtain,—regard a moment with ſilence—

—Are theſe cold hands and pale lips all that is left of him who was canoniz'd by

by his own pride, or made a god of by his flatterers?

O my ſoul! with what dreams haſt thou been bewitched? how haſt thou been deluded by the objects thou haſt ſo eagerly graſped at?

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does nevertheleſs ſtrike a damp upon human Pride, much more muſt the conſiderations do ſo, which ariſe from the wilful depravations of his nature.

Survey yourſelves, my dear Chriſtians, a few moments in this light—behold a diſobedient, ungrateful, intractable, and diſorderly ſet of creatures, going wrong ſeven times in a day,—acting ſometimes every hour of it againſt your own convictions—your own intereſts, and the intentions of your God, who wills and propoſes nothing but your happineſs and proſperity—what reaſon does this view furniſh you for Pride? how many does it ſuggeſt to mortify and make you aſhamed?—well might the ſon of Syrach ſay in that ſarcaſtical remark of his upon it, "That Pride was not made for man;"—for ſome purpoſes, and for ſome particular beings, the paſſion might have been ſhaped—but not for him—fancy it where you will, 'tis no where ſo improper—'tis in no creature ſo unbecoming.—

—But why ſo cold an aſſent to ſo inconteſted a truth?—Perhaps thou haſt reaſons to be proud:—for heaven's ſake let us hear them

them—Thou haſt the advantages of birth and title to boaſt of—or thou ſtandeſt in the ſunſhine of court favour—or thou haſt a large fortune—or great talents—or much learning—or nature has beſtowed her graces upon thy perſon—ſpeak—on which of theſe foundations haſt thou raiſed this fanciful ſtructure?—Let us examine them.

Thou art well born:—then truſt me, 'twill pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble: humility calls no man down from his rank,—diveſts not princes of their titles; it is in life what the *clear obſcure* is in painting; it makes the hero ſtep forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group in which he would otherwiſe ſtand confounded for ever.

If thou art rich—then ſhew the greatneſs of thy fortune,—or what is better, the greatneſs of thy ſoul, in the meekneſs of thy converſation; condeſcend to men of low eſtate—ſupport the diſtreſſed, and patronize the neglected.—Be great; but let it be in conſidering riches as they are; as "talents committed to an earthen veſſel"—That thou art but the *receiver*,—and that to be obliged and to be vain too,—is but the old ſolecifm of pride and beggary, which, though they often meet,—yet ever make but an abſurd ſociety.

If thou art powerful in intereſt, and ſtandeſt deified by a ſervile tribe of dependents,—why ſhouldeſt thou be proud,—becauſe they are hungry?—Scourge me ſuch ſycophants:

phants: they have turned the heads of thouſands as well as thine—

—But 'tis thy own dexterity and ſtrength which have gained thee this eminence:—allow it; but art thou proud that thou ſtandeſt in a place where thou art the mark of one man's envy, another man's malice, or a third man's revenge,—where good men may be ready to ſuſpect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down? I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain: Haman was ſo, becauſe he was admitted alone to queen Eſther's banquet; and the diſtinction raiſed him,—but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dream'd or thought of.

Let us paſs on to the pretences of learning, &c. &c. If thou haſt a little, thou wilt be proud of it in courſe: if thou haſt much, and good ſenſe along with it, there will be no reaſon to diſpute againſt the paſſion: a beggarly parade of remnants is but a ſorry object of Pride at the beſt;—but more ſo when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet—"Alas! Maſter,—"for it was borrowed*."

It is treaſon to ſay the ſame of Beauty—whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which Pride is wont to ſet it off: the weakeſt minds are moſt caught with both; being ever glad to win attention and credit from ſmall and ſlender accidents, through diſability of purchaſing them by better means.

* 2 Kings, vi. 7.

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In truth, beauty has ſo many charms, one knows not how to ſpeak againſt it; and when it happens that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous ſoul, when the beauty of the face ſpeaks out the modeſty and humility of the mind, and the juſtneſs of the proportion raiſes our thoughts up to the art and wiſdom of the great Creator, ſomething may be allowed it,—and ſomething to the embelliſhments which ſet it off;—and yet, when the whole apology is read,—it will be found at laſt, that Beauty, like Truth, never is ſo glorious as when it goes the plaineſt.

Simplicity is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of any thing in this filly world, it ſhould be of this honeſt alliance.

Conſider what has been ſaid; and may the God of all mercies and kindneſs watch over your paſſions, and inſpire you "with all humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, patience, and long ſuffering."—Amen.

SERMON XXV.

HUMILITY.

MATTHEW, XI. 29.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls.

THE great buſineſs of man, is the regulation of his ſpirit; the poſſeſſion of ſuch a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary ſtages of it, afford us what we ſhall be ſure to ſtand in need of,—"Reſt unto our ſouls."

—Reſt unto our ſouls!—'tis all we want—the end of all our wiſhes and purſuits: give us a proſpect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermoſt parts of the earth to have it in poſſeſſion: we ſeek for it in titles, in riches and pleaſures—climb up after it by ambition, come down again and ſtoop for it by avarice,—try all extremes; ſtill we are gone out of the way, nor is it, till after many miſerable experiments, that we are convinced at laſt, we have been ſeeking every where for it, but where there is a proſpect of finding it; and that is, within ourſelves, in a meek and lowly diſpoſition of heart. This, and this only, will give us reſt unto our ſouls:—reſt, from thoſe turbulent and haughty paſſions which diſturb our quiet:

—reſt,

—reſt, from the provocations and diſappointments of the world, and a train of untold evils too long to be recounted, againſt all which this frame and preparation of mind is the beſt protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Conſider how great a ſhare of the uneaſineſſes which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their riſe to nothing elſe but the diſpoſitions of mind which are oppoſite to this character.

With regard to the provocations and offences which are unavoidably happening to a man in his commerce with the world,—take it as a rule,—as a man's pride is,—ſo is always his diſpleaſure:—as the opinion of himſelf riſes,—ſo does the injury,—ſo does his reſentment: 'tis this which gives edge and force to the inſtrument which has ſtruck him —and excites that heat in the wound which renders it incurable.

See how different the caſe is with the humble man: one half of theſe painful conflicts he actually eſcapes; the other part fall lightly on him:—he provokes no man by contempt; thruſts himſelf forward as the mark of no man's envy: ſo that he cuts off the firſt fretful occaſions of the greateſt part of theſe evils; and for thoſe in which the paſſions of others would involve him, like the humble ſhrub in the valley, gently gives way, and ſcarce feels the injury of thoſe ſtormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and tear it up by its roots.

If you conſider it with regard to the many diſappointments of this life, which ariſe from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world,—the reaſoning is the ſame.

What we expect,—is ever in proportion to the eſtimate made of ourſelves; when pride and ſelf-love have brought us in their account of this matter,—we find, that we are worthy of all honours—fit for all places and employments:—as our expectations riſe and multiply, ſo muſt our diſappointments with them; and there needs nothing more to lay the foundation of our unhappineſs, and both to make and keep us miſerable. And in truth there is nothing ſo common in life as to ſee thouſands, who, you would ſay, had all the reaſon in the world to be at reſt, ſo torn up and diſquieted with ſorrows of this claſs, and ſo inceſſantly tortured with the diſappointments which their pride and paſſions have created for them, that though they appear to have all the ingredients of happineſs in their hands,—they can neither compound or uſe them:—How ſhould they? the goad is ever in their ſides, and ſo hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no reſt day or night.

Humility, therefore, recommends itſelf as a ſecurity againſt theſe heart-aches, which though ridiculous ſometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are ſerious enough to the man who ſuffers them, and I believe would make no inconſiderable account in a true

catalogue

catalogue of the diſquietudes of mortal man: againſt theſe, I ſay, Humility is the beſt defence.

He that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his deſires, and conſequently moderate in his purſuit of them: like another man he may fail in his attempts, and loſe the point he aimed at,—but that is all,—he loſes not himſelf,—he loſes not his happineſs and peace of mind with it,—even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid.—Bleſſed character! when ſuch a one is thruſt back, who does not pity him?—when he falls, who would not ſtretch out a hand to raiſe him up?

And here, I cannot help ſtopping in the midſt of this argument, to make a ſhort obſervation, which is this. When we reflect upon the character of Humility,—we are apt to think it ſtands the moſt naked and defenceleſs of all virtues whatever,—the leaſt able to ſupport its claims againſt the inſolent antagoniſt who ſeems ready to bear him down, and all oppoſition which ſuch a temper can make.

Now, if we conſider him as ſtanding alone,—no doubt, in ſuch a caſe he will be overpowered and trampled upon by his oppoſer;—but if we conſider the meek and lowly man, as he is—fenced and guarded by the love, the friendſhip, and wiſhes of all mankind,—that the other ſtands alone, hated, diſcountenanced, without one true friend or hearty well-wiſher on his ſide;—when this is balanced,

we ſhall have reaſon to change our opinion, and be convinced that the humble man, ſtrengthened with ſuch an alliance, is far from being ſo over-matched as at firſt ſight he may appear;—nay I believe one might venture to go further and engage for it, that in all ſuch caſes, where real fortitude and true perſonal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would ſooner look for it in ſuch a temper than in that of his adverſary. Pride may make a man violent,—but Humility will make him firm;—and which of the two, do you think, likely to come off with honour?—he, who acts from the changeable impulſe of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury,—or the man who ſtands cool and collected in himſelf; who governs his reſentments, inſtead of being governed by them, and on every occaſion acts upon the ſteady motives of principle and duty?

But this by the way;—though in truth it falls in with the main argument; for if the obſervation is juſt, and Humility has the advantages where we ſhould leaſt expect them, the argument riſes higher in behalf of thoſe which are more apparently on its ſide.—In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man muſt never hope for in this world, that is, "reſt to his ſoul,"—ſo does he likewiſe meet with it from the influence ſuch a temper has upon his condition under the evils of his life, not as chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance,

heritance, by the appointment of God. For if, as Job ſays, we are born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards, ſurely it is he who thinks the greateſt of theſe troubles below his ſins, —and the ſmalleſt favours above his merit, that is likely to ſuffer the leaſt from the one, and enjoy the moſt from the other: 'tis he who poſſeſſes his ſoul in meekneſs, and keeps it ſubjected to all the iſſues of fortune, that is the fartheſt out of their reach.—No.—He blames not the ſun, though it does not ripen his vine, nor bluſters at the winds, though they bring him no profit.—If the fountain of the humble man riſes not as high as he could wiſh,—he thinks, however, that it riſes as high as it ought; and as the laws of nature ſtill do their duty, that he has no cauſe to complain againſt them.

If diſappointed of riches—he knows the providence of God is not his debtor; that though he has received leſs than others, yet as he thinks himſelf leſs than the leaſt, he has reaſon to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble man, in other reſpects,—he knows a truth which the proud man does never acknowledge, and that is, that the world was not made for him; and therefore how little ſhare ſoever he has of its advantages, he ſees an argument of content, in reflecting how little it is, that a compound of ſin, of ignorance, and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A ſoul thus turned and reſigned, is carried ſmoothly down the ſtream of providence; no

tempt-

temptations in his paſſage diſquiet him with deſire,—no dangers alarm him with fear: though open to all the changes and chances of others,—yet by ſeeing the juſtice of what happens,—and humbly giving way to the blow,—though he is ſmitten, he is not ſmitten like other men, or feels the ſmart which they do.

Thus much for the doctrine of Humility; let us now look towards the example of it.

It is obſerved by ſome one, that as pride was the paſſion through which ſin and miſery entered into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph of ruining our nature, that therefore the Son of God, who came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt, when he entered upon the work of our reſtoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed; and this he did by endeavouring to bring the ſoul of man back to its original temper of Humility; ſo that his firſt public addreſs from the Mount began with a declaration of bleſſedneſs to the poor in ſpirit,—and almoſt his laſt exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had ſet them of this virtue, and "to learn of him to be "meek and lowly in heart."

It is the moſt unanſwerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man,—and ſo perſuaſive and accommodated to all Chriſtians, that as much pride as there is ſtill in the world, it is not credible but that every believer muſt receive ſome tincture of the character or bias towards it from the exam-

ple of ſo great, and yet ſo humble a Maſter, whoſe whole courſe of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and in every inſtance of it ſhewed, that he came not to ſhare the pride and glories of life, or ſwell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to caſt a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himſelf rather as a ſervant than a maſter,—coming, as he continually declared, not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter; and as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful deſcription of him,—to have no form or comelineſs, nor any beauty that they ſhould deſire him. The voluntary meanneſs of his birth,—the poverty of his life,—the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the Goſpel to the poor,—the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head,—all ſpoke the ſame language:—that the God of truth ſhould ſubmit to the ſuſpicion of an impoſture:—his humble deportment under that, and a thouſand provocations of a thankleſs people, ſtill raiſes this character higher;—and what exalts it to its higheſt pitch,—the tender and pathetic proof he gave of the ſame diſpoſition at the concluſion and great cataſtrophe of his ſufferings,—when a life full of ſo many inſtances of humility was crowned with the moſt endearing one of "humbling himſelf "even to the death of the croſs;"—the death of a ſlave, a malefactor—dragged to Calvary, without oppoſition—inſulted without complaint.—

—Bleſſed

—Bleſſed Jeſus! how can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart?—how can he but profit when ſuch a leſſon was ſeconded—by ſuch an example?

If humility ſhines ſo bright in the character of Chriſt, ſo does it in that of his religion; the true ſpirit of which tends all the ſame way.—Chriſtianity, when rightly explained and practiſed, is all meekneſs and candour, and love and courteſy: and there is no one paſſion our Saviour rebukes ſo often, or with ſo much ſharpneſs, as that one, which is ſubverſive of theſe kind effects,—and that is pride, which in proportion as it governs us, neceſſarily leads us on to a diſcourteous opinion and treatment of others.—I ſay *neceſſarily*,—becauſe 'tis a natural conſequence, and the progreſs from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our Saviour often remarks in the character of the Phariſees:—they truſted in themſelves,—'twas no wonder then they deſpiſed others.

This, I believe, might principally relate to ſpiritual pride, which, by the way, is the worſt of all prides; and as it is a very bad ſpecies of a very bad paſſion, I cannot do better than conclude the diſcourſe with ſome remarks upon it.

In moſt conceits of a religious ſuperiority, there has uſually gone hand in hand with it, another fancy,—which—I ſuppoſe has fed it; and that is, a perſuaſion of ſome more than ordinary

ordinary aids and illuminations from above. ——Let us examine this matter.

That the influence and aſſiſtance of God's ſpirit in a way imperceptible to us, does enable us to render him an acceptable ſervice, we learn from Scripture.—In what particular manner this is effected, ſo that the act ſhall ſtill be imputed ours—the Scripture ſays not: we know only the account is ſo; but as for any ſenſible demonſtrations of its workings to be felt as ſuch within us—the word of God is utterly ſilent; nor can that ſilence be ſupplied by any experience. ——We have none; unleſs you call the falſe pretences to it ſuch,—ſuggeſted by an enthuſiaſtic or diſtempered fancy. As expreſsly as we are told and pray for the inſpiration of God's ſpirit, there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever marked, to diſtinguiſh them from the efforts and determinations of our own reaſon: and as firmly as moſt Chriſtians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may venture to affirm, that ſince the promiſes were made, there never was a Chriſtian of a cool head and ſound judgment, that, in any inſtance of a change of life, would preſume to ſay, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help,—or which to the operations of his own mind; or who, upon looking back, would pretend to ſtrike the line, and ſay, 'here it was that my own re-'flections ended;—and at this point the 'ſuggeſtions of the Spirit of God began to 'take place.'

However

However backwards the world has been in former ages in the diſcovery of ſuch points as God never meant us to know,—we have been more ſucceſsful in our own days:—thouſands can trace out now the impreſſions of this divine intercourſe in themſelves, from the firſt moment they received it, and with ſuch diſtinct intelligence of its progreſs and workings, as to require no evidence of its truth.

It muſt be owned, that the preſent age has not altogether the honour of this diſcovery;—there were too many grounds given to improve on in the religious cant of the laſt century;—when the *in-comings*, *in-dwellings*, and *out-lettings* of the Spirit, were the ſubjects of ſo much edification; and, when, as they do now, the moſt illiterate mechanics, who, as a witty divine ſaid of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one, were yet able ſo to frame their nonſenſe to the nonſenſe of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they pray'd and preach'd by inſpiration, but that the moſt common actions of their lives were ſet about in the Spirit of the Lord.

The tenets of the quakers (a harmleſs quiet people) are collateral deſcendents from the ſame enthuſiaſtic original; and their accounts and way of reaſoning upon their inward light and ſpiritual worſhip, are much the ſame; which laſt they carry thus much further, as to believe the Holy Ghoſt comes down upon their aſſemblies, and *moves* them, without

regard

regard to condition or ſex, to make interceſſions with unutterable groans.

So that, in fact, the opinions of methodiſts, upon which I was firſt entering, is but a republication with ſome alterations of the ſame extravagant conceits; and as enthuſiaſm generally ſpeaks the ſame language in all ages, 'tis but too ſadly verified in this; for though we have not yet got to the old terms of the in-comings and in-dwellings of the Spirit,—yet we have arrived at the firſt feelings of its entrance, recorded with as particular an exactneſs as an act of filiation,—ſo that numbers will tell you the identical place,——the day of the month, and the hour of the night, when the Spirit came in upon them, and took poſſeſſion of their hearts.

Now there is this inconvenience on our ſide, That there is no arguing with a frenzy of this kind: for unleſs a repreſentation of the caſe be a confutation of its folly to them, they muſt for ever be led captive by a deluſion, from which no reaſoner can redeem them: for if you ſhould inquire, upon what evidence ſo ſtrange a perſuaſion is grounded? —they will tell you, 'They feel it is ſo.'— If you reply, That this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefore would wiſh to be ſatisfied by what tokens they are able to diſtinguiſh ſuch emotions from thoſe of fancy and complexion? they will anſwer, That the manner of it is incommunicable by human language, but 'tis a matter of fact,—they feel its operations

as

as plain and diſtinct, as the natural ſenſations of pleaſure, or the pains of a diſorder'd body. —And ſince I have mentioned a diſorder'd body, I cannot help ſuggeſting that amongſt the more ſerious and deluded of this ſect, 'tis much to be doubted whether a diſorder'd body has not oft-times as great a ſhare in letting in theſe conceits as a diſorder'd mind.

When a poor diſconſolated drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment,—prays without ceaſing till his imagination is heated, —faſts and mortifies and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind; is it a wonder, that the mechanical diſturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, ſhould be miſtook for workings of a different kind from what they are;—or that in ſuch a ſituation, where the mind ſits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on its ſide, is it ſtrange if every commotion ſhould help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter ſubject for the treatment of a Phyſician than a Divine?

In many caſes, they ſeem ſo much above the ſkill of either, that unleſs God in his mercy rebuke this lying ſpirit, and call it back,—it may go on and perſuade millions into their deſtruction.

SERMON XXVI.

ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE WORLD.

ROMANS, I. 22.

Profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools.

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is ſo univerſally a bubble, as to that of being thought wiſe: and the affectation of it is ſo viſible in men of all complexions, that you every day ſee ſome one or other ſo very ſolicitous to eſtabliſh the character, as not to allow himſelf leiſure to do the things which fairly win it;—expending more art and ſtratagem to appear ſo in the eyes of the world, than what would ſuffice to make him ſo in truth.

It is owing to the force of this deſire, that you ſee in general there is no injury touches a man ſo ſenſibly, as an inſult upon his parts and capacity: tell a man of other defects, that he wants learning, induſtry or application,—he will hear your reproof with patience.—Nay you may go further: take him in a proper ſeaſon, you may tax his morals, —you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct, — paſſionate or revengeful in his nature — looſe in his principles;— deliver it with the gentleneſs of a friend,—poſſibly he'll not only bear with you,—but, if ingenuous, he

will thank you for your lecture, and promiſe a reformation;—but hint—hint but at a defect in his intellectuals,—touch but that ſore place,—from that moment you are look'd upon as an enemy ſent to torment him before his time, and in return may reckon upon his reſentment and ill-will for ever; ſo that in general you will find it ſafer to tell a man, he is a knave than a fool,—and ſtand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honeſty, than a point of common ſenſe.

Strange ſouls that we are! as if to live well was not the greateſt argument of Wiſdom;—and, as if what reflected upon our morals, did not moſt of all reflect upon our underſtandings!

This, however, is a reflection we make a ſhift to overlook in the heat of this purſuit; and though we all covet this great character of Wiſdom, there is ſcarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgments concerning it; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the teſt or the balance; and though 'tis of the laſt conſequence not to be deceived in it,—we generally take it upon truſt,—ſeldom ſuſpect the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So that however inconſiſtent a man ſhall be in his opinions of this, and what abſurd meaſures ſoever he takes in conſequence of it, in the conduct of his life,—he ſtill ſpeaks comfort to his ſoul: and like Solomon, when he had leaſt pretence for it,—in the midſt of his non-

ſenſe

ſenſe will cry out and ſay,—"That all my "wiſdom remaineth with me."

Where then is wiſdom to be found? and and where is the place of underſtanding?

The politicians of this world, "profeſſing "themſelves wiſe,"—admit of no other claims of wiſdom but the knowledge of men and buſineſs, the underſtanding the intereſts of ſtates,—the intrigues of courts—the finding out the paſſions and weakneſſes of foreign miniſters—and turning them and all events to their country's glory and advantage.—

—Not ſo the little man of this world, who thinks the main point of wiſdom is to take care of himſelf;—to be wiſe in his generation; —to make uſe of the opportunity whilſt he has it, of raiſing a fortune, and heraldizing a name.—Far wide is the ſpeculative and ſtudious man (whoſe office is in the clouds) from ſuch little ideas:—Wiſdom dwells with him in finding out the ſecrets of nature;—ſounding the depths of arts and ſciences;—meaſuring the heavens; telling the number of the ſtars, and calling them all by their names: ſo that when in our buſy imaginations we have built and unbuilt again "God's "ſtories in the heavens,"—and fancy we have found out the point whereon to fix the foundations of the earth; and in the language of the book of Job, "have ſearched out the corner-"ſtone thereof," we think our titles to wiſdom built upon the ſame baſis with thoſe of our knowledge, and that they will continue for ever.

The miſtake of theſe pretenders is ſhewn at large by the Apoſtle, in the chapter from which the text is taken,—"Profeſſing themſelves *Wiſe*,"—in which expreſſion (by the way) St. Paul is thought to allude to the vanity of the Greeks and Romans, who being great encouragers of arts and learning, which they had carried to extraordinary heights, conſidered all other nations as *Barbarians*, in reſpect of themſelves; and amongſt whom, particularly the Greeks, the men of ſtudy and inquiry had aſſumed to themſelves, with great indecorum, the title of the Wiſe-men.

With what parade and oſtentation ſoever this was made out, it had the fate to be attended with one of the moſt mortifying abatements which could happen to Wiſdom; and that was an ignorance of thoſe points which moſt concerned man to know.

This he ſhews from the general ſtate of the Gentile world, in the great article of their miſconceptions of the Deity—and, as wrong notions produce wrong actions,—of the duties and ſervices they owed to him, and in courſe of what they owed to one another.

For though, as he argues in the foregoing verſes,—"The inviſible things of him from "the creation of the world might be clearly "ſeen and underſtood, by the things that "are made;"—that is,—Though God, by the cleareſt diſcovery of himſelf, had ever laid before mankind ſuch evident proofs of his eternal Being,—his infinite powers and perfections, ſo that what is to be known of his inviſible

inviſible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodneſs,—and the viſible frame and order of the world:—yet ſo utterly were they without excuſe,—that though they knew God, and ſaw his image and ſuperſcription in every part of his works,—"yet "they glorified him not."—So bad a uſe did they make of the powers given them for this great diſcovery, that inſtead of adoring the Being thus manifeſted to them, in purity and truth, they fell into the moſt groſs and abſurd deluſions,—"changed the glory of the incor-"ruptible God, into an image made like un-"to corruptible men——to birds,——to four-"footed beaſts and creeping things;——pro-"feſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became "fools."—All their ſpecious wiſdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the moſt diſhonourable of all miſtakes,—in ſetting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks.

The fountain of religion being thus poiſoned, no wonder the ſtream ſhewed its effects, which are charged upon them in the following words, where he deſcribes the heathen world "as full of all unrighteouſneſs,"—fornication,—covetouſneſs,—maliciouſneſs,—full of murder,—envy,—debate,—malignity,—whiſperers,—back-biters,—haters of God,—proud,—boaſters,—inventors of evil things,—diſobedient to parents,—without underſtanding, without natural affection,—implacable,—unmerciful!—God in heaven defend us from ſuch a catalogue!

But theſe diſorders, if fairly conſidered, you'll ſay, have in no ages ariſen ſo much from want of light, as a want of diſpoſition to follow the light which God has ever imparted: that the law written in their hearts was clear and expreſs enough for any reaſonable creatures, and would have directed them, had they not ſuffered their paſſions more forcibly to direct them otherwiſe: that if we are to judge from this effect, namely, the corruption of the world, the ſame prejudice will recur even againſt the Chriſtian religion; ſince mankind have at leaſt been as wicked in later days, as in the more remote and ſimple ages of the world; and that, if we may truſt to facts, there are no vices which the Apoſtle fixes upon the heathen world, before the preaching of the Goſpel, which may not be paralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in the Chriſtian world ſince.

This neceſſarily brings us to an inquiry, Whether Chriſtianity has done the world any ſervice?——and, How far the morals of it have been made better ſince this ſyſtem has been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppoſe facts to facts to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us ſee how far their miſtakes concerning the Deity, will throw light upon the ſubject.

That there was one ſupreme Being who made this world, and who ought to be worſhipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and ſo obvious a truth in nature,

——that Reaſon, as the Apoſtle acknowledges, was always able to diſcover it: and yet it ſeems ſtrange, that the ſame faculty which made the diſcovery, ſhould be ſo little able to keep true to its own judgment, and ſupport it long againſt the prejudices of wrong heads, and the propenſity of weak ones, towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of ſomething to have gone hand in hand with reaſon, and fixed the perſuaſion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one God the Maker and Supporter of Heaven and Earth, infinite in wiſdom, and knowledge, and all perfections;—how ſoon was this ſimple idea loſt, and mankind led to diſpoſe of theſe attributes inherent in the Godhead, and divide and ſubdivide them again amongſt deities, which their own dreams had given ſubſtance to;—his eternal power and dominion parcell'd out to gods of the land, —to gods of the ſea, to gods of the infernal regions: whilſt the great God of gods, and Lord of lords, who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world,—who is ſo great that nought is able to controul or withſtand his power, was ſuppoſed to reſt contented with his allotment, and to want power to act within ſuch parts of his empire, as they diſmembered and aſſigned to others.

If the number of their gods, and this partition of their power, would leſſen the idea of their majeſty, What muſt be the opinions of their origin? When inſtead of that glorious deſcription, which Scripture gives of "The

"Ancient of days who inhabiteth eternity,"—they gravely aſſigned particular times and places for the births and education of their gods; ſo that there was ſcarce a hamlet or even a deſert in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by ſome favour or accident of this kind.

And what rendered ſuch conceits the more groſs and abſurd,—they ſuppoſed not only that the gods they worſhipped had a beginning, but that they were produced by fleſhly parents, and accordingly they attributed to them corporeal ſhapes and difference of ſex: and indeed in this they were a little conſiſtent, for their deities ſeemed to partake ſo much of the frailties to which fleſh and blood is ſubject, that their hiſtory and their pedigree were much of a piece, and might reaſonably claim each other. For they imputed to them not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the moſt unmanly ſenſualities, and what would be a reproach to human nature, ſuch as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, inceſt: and even in the accounts which we have from the ſublimeſt of their poets,—what are they, but anecdotes of their ſquabbles amongſt themſelves—their intrigues, their jealouſies, their ungovernable tranſports of choler,—nay, even their thefts—their drunkenneſs, and bloodſhed?

Here let us ſtop a moment and inquire, what was Reaſon doing all this time, to be ſo miſerably inſulted and abuſed? Where held ſhe her empire whilſt her bulwarks were thus

thus borne down, and her firſt principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If ſhe was able by herſelf to regain the power ſhe had loſt, and put a ſtop to this folly and confuſion,—why did ſhe not; if ſhe was not able to reſiſt this torrent alone,—the point is given up—ſhe wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But though reaſon, you'll ſay, could not overthrow theſe popular miſtakes,—yet it ſaw the folly of them, and was at all times able to diſprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain too, that the more diligent inquirers after truth did not in fact fall into theſe abſurd notions, which, by the way, is an obſervation more to our purpoſe than theirs who uſually make it, and ſhews that though their reaſonings were good, there always wanted ſomething which they could not ſupply to give them ſuch weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwiſe was but an opinion without force.

Beſides—which is a more direct anſwer,—though 'tis true the ableſt men gave no credit to the multiplicity of gods,—(for they had a religion for themſelves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which neceſſarily ſupported theſe very miſtakes,—namely, that as different nations had different gods, it was every man's duty (I ſuppoſe more for quietneſs than prin-

principle's ſake) to worſhip the gods of his country; which, by the way, conſidering their numbers, was not ſo eaſy a taſk,—for what with celeſtial gods, and gods aërial, terreſtrial, and infernal, with the goddeſſes, their wives and miſtreſſes, upon the loweſt computation, the heathen world acknowledged no leſs than thirty thouſand deities, all which claimed the rights and ceremonies of religious worſhip.

But 'twill be ſaid, allowing the bulk of mankind were under ſuch deluſions,—they were ſtill but ſpeculative.—What was that to their practice? however defective in their theology and more abſtracted points, their morality was no way connected with it.—There is no need, that the everlaſting laws of juſtice and mercy ſhould be fetched down from above,—ſince they can be proved from more obvious mediums;—they were as neceſſary for the ſame good purpoſes of ſociety then as now; and we may preſume they ſaw their intereſt and purſued it.

That the neceſſities of ſociety, and the impoſſibilities of its ſubſiſting otherwiſe, would point out the convenience, or if you will,—the duty of ſocial virtues, is unqueſtionable:—but I firmly deny, that therefore religion and morality are independent of each other: they appear ſo far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious ſenſe of the duty, can act without the influence of the other: ſurely the moſt exalted motive which can only be depended

upon

upon for the uniform practice of virtue,—muſt come down from *above*,—from the love and imitation of the goodneſs of that Being in whoſe ſight we wiſh to render ourſelves acceptable: this will operate at all times and all places,—in the darkeſt cloſet, as much as on the greateſt and moſt public theatres of the world.

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or ſuch impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted whether in the many ſecret trials of our virtue, we ſhould not determine our caſes of conſcience with much the ſame kind of caſuiſtry as that of the Libertine in Terence, who being engaged in a very unjuſtifiable purſuit, and happening to ſee a picture which repreſented a known ſtory of Jupiter in a like tranſaction,—argued the matter thus within himſelf.—If the great Jupiter could not reſtrain his appetites, and deny himſelf an indulgence of this kind—*ego Homuncio hoc non facerem?* ſhall I a mortal,—an inconſiderable mortal too, clothed with infirmities of fleſh and blood,—pretend to a virtue, which the Father of gods and men could not? What inſolence!

The concluſion was natural enough; and as ſo great a maſter of nature puts it into the mouth of one of his principal characters, no doubt the language was then underſtood; it was copied from common life, and was not the firſt application which had been made of the ſtory.

It will ſcarce admit of a queſtion, Whether vice would not naturally grow bold upon the

credit

credit of ſuch an example; or whether ſuch impreſſions did not influence the lives and morals of many in the heathen world; and had there been no other proof of it, but the natural tendency of ſuch notions to corrupt them, it had been ſufficient reaſon to believe it was ſo.

No doubt, there is ſufficient room for amendment in the Chriſtian world, and we may be ſaid to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, conſidering what motives we have from the purity of our religion, and the force of its ſanctions, to make us better: —yet ſtill I affirm, that if theſe reſtraints were taken off, the world would be infinitely worſe; and though ſome ſenſe of morality might be preſerved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more conſiderate of us, yet in general I am perſuaded, that the bulk of mankind, upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, would ſoon come to "live without God in the "world," and in a ſhort time differ from Indians themſelves in little elſe but their complexions.

If, after all, the Chriſtian religion has not left a ſufficient proviſion againſt the wickedneſs of the world,—the ſhort and true anſwer is this, That there can be none.

It is ſufficient to leave us without excuſe, that the excellency of this inſtitution in its doctrine, its precepts, and its examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people;—every page is an addreſs to our hearts to win them to theſe purpoſes;—but as religion was not intended to work

work upon men by force and natural neceſſity, but by moral perſuaſion, which ſets good and evil before them,—ſo that if men have power to do the evil and chuſe the good,—and will abuſe it,—this cannot be avoided.—Religion even implies a freedom of choice, and all the beings in the world which have it, were created free to ſtand and free to fall;—and therefore men who will not be perſuaded by this way of addreſs, muſt expect, and be contented to be reckoned with according to the talents they have received.

SERMON XXVII.

THE ABUSES OF CONSCIENCE CONSIDERED.

HEBREWS, XIII. 18.

—For we truſt we have a good Conſcience.—

TRUST!—Truſt we have a good Conſcience!—Surely you will ſay, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving upon the moſt indiſputable evidence, it muſt be this very thing,—Whether he has a good Conſcience, or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a ſtranger to the true ſtate of this account:—He muſt be privy to his own thoughts and deſires—He muſt remember his paſt purſuits, and know certainly the true ſprings and motives, which, in general, have governed the actions of his life.

In other matters we may be deceived by falſe appearances; and as the wiſe man complains, "Hardly do we gueſs aright at the "things that are upon the earth, and with "labour do we find the things that are before "us:"—but here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herſelf:—is conſcious of the web ſhe has wove;—knows its texture and

and fineneſs; and the exact ſhare which every paſſion has had in working upon the ſeveral deſigns, which virtue or vice has plann'd before her.

Now,—as Conſcience is nothing elſe but the knowledge which the mind has within itſelf of this; and the judgment, either of approbation or cenſure, which it unavoidably makes upon the ſucceſſive actions of our lives,—'tis plain, you will ſay, from the very terms of the propoſition, whenever this inward teſtimony goes againſt a man, and he ſtands ſelf-accuſed,—that he muſt neceſſarily be a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his ſide, and his heart condemns him not,—that it is not a matter of *truſt*, as the Apoſtle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the "Conſcience is good," and that the *man* muſt be *good* alſo.

At firſt ſight, this may ſeem to be a true ſtate of the caſe; and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is ſo truly impreſs'd upon the mind of man; that did no ſuch thing ever happen, as that the Conſcience of a man, by long habits of ſin, might (as the Scripture aſſures us it may) inſenſibly become hard; and like ſome tender parts of his body, by much ſtreſs, and continual hard uſage, loſe by degrees that nice ſenſe and perception with which God and nature endowed it:—Did this never happen:—or was it certain that ſelf-love could never hang the leaſt bias upon the judgment:—or that the little

little intereſts below could riſe up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompaſs them about with clouds and thick darkneſs:—could no ſuch thing as favour and affection enter this ſacred court:—did Wit diſdain to take a bribe in it, or was aſhamed to ſhew its face as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment:—or, laſtly, were we aſſured that Intereſt ſtood always unconcerned whilſt the cauſe was hearing,—and that Paſſion never got into the judgment-ſeat, and pronounced ſentence in the ſtead of Reaſon, which is ſuppoſed always to preſide and determine upon the caſe:—was this truly ſo, as the objection muſt ſuppoſe, no doubt, then, the religious and moral ſtate of a man would be exactly what he himſelf eſteemed it; and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better meaſure, than the degrees of his own approbation or cenſure.

I own, in one caſe, whenever a man's Conſcience does accuſe him (as it ſeldom errs on that ſide) that he is guilty;—and, unleſs in melancholy and hypochondriac caſes, we may ſafely pronounce that there is always ſufficient grounds for the accuſation.

But, the converſe of the propoſition will not hold true,—namely, That wherever there is guilt, the Conſcience muſt accuſe; and, if it does not, that a man is therefore innocent. —This is not fact:—ſo that the common conſolation which ſome good Chriſtian or other is hourly adminiſtering to himſelf,—That he thanks

thanks God his mind does not miſgive him; and that conſequently, he has a good Conſcience, becauſe he has a quiet one.—As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at firſt ſight, yet, when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts, you find it liable to ſo much error, from a falſe application of it:—the principle on which it goes ſo often perverted:—the whole force of it loſt, and ſometimes ſo vilely caſt away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man ſhall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles; exceptionable in his conduct to the world: ſhall live ſhameleſs,—in the open commiſſion of a ſin which no reaſon or pretence can juſtify;—a ſin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he ſhall ruin for ever the deluded partner of his guilt;—rob her of her beſt dowry;—and not only cover her own head with diſhonour, but involve a whole virtuous family in ſhame and ſorrow for her ſake.—Surely,—you'll think, Conſcience muſt lead ſuch a man a troubleſome life:—he can have no reſt night or day from its reproaches.

Alas! Conſcience had ſomething elſe to do all this time than break in upon him: as Elijah reproached the god Baal, this *domeſtic god* was either "talking, or purſuing, "or was in a journey, or, peradventure, he "ſlept, and could not be awoke." Perhaps

he was gone out in company with Honour, to fight a duel;—to pay off ſome debt at play;—or dirty annuity, the bargain of his luſt.—Perhaps, Conſcience all this time was engaged at home, talking aloud againſt petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon ſome ſuch puny crimes as his fortune and rank in life ſecured him againſt all temptation of committing:—ſo that he lives as merrily,—ſleeps as ſoundly in his bed;—and, at the laſt, meets death with as much unconcern,—perhaps, much more ſo, than a much better man.

Another is ſordid, unmerciful;—a ſtrait-hearted, ſelfiſh wretch, incapable either of private friendſhips, or public ſpirit.—Take notice how he paſſes by the widow and orphan in their diſtreſs; and ſees all the miſeries incident to human life without a ſigh or a prayer.—Shall not Conſcience riſe up and ſting him on ſuch occaſions? No.—Thank God, there is no occaſion. 'I pay 'every man his own,—I have no fornication 'to anſwer to my Conſcience, no faithleſs 'vows or promiſes to make up, I have de-'bauch'd no man's wife or child.—Thank 'God, I am not as other men, adulterers, 'unjuſt, or even as this libertine who ſtands 'before me.'

A third is crafty and deſigning in his nature.—View his whole life,—'tis nothing elſe but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable ſubterfuges, baſely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain-dealing, and

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the ſafe enjoyment of our ſeveral properties. —You will ſee ſuch a one working out a frame of little deſigns upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man: —ſhall raiſe a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth,—or the unſuſpecting temper of his friend, who would have truſted him with his life. When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and ſtate it over again with his Conſcience—Conſcience looks into the Statutes at Large,—finds perhaps no *expreſs law* broken by what he has done;—perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurr'd;—ſees no ſcourge waving over his head,—or priſon opening its gate upon him—What is there to affright his Conſcience?—Conſcience has got ſafely entrenched behind the letter of the law, ſits there invulnerable, fortified with *caſes* and *reports* ſo ſtrongly on all ſides, —that 'tis not preaching can diſpoſſeſs it of its hold.

Another ſhall want even this refuge,— ſhall break through all this ceremony of ſlow chicane; ſcorns the doubtful workings of ſecret plots and cautious trains to bring about his purpoſe.—See the barefaced villain how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders,—horrid! But indeed much better was not to be expected in this caſe,—the poor man was in the dark!—His prieſt had got the keeping of his Conſcience, and all he had let him know of it was, That he muſt believe in the Pope;—go to maſs;—croſs himſelf;—

tell his beads,—be a good Catholic; and that this in all conſcience was enough to carry him to heaven. What?—if he perjures?—Why,—he had a mental reſervation in it. But if he is ſo wicked and abandoned a wretch as you repreſent him,—if he robs or murders, will not Conſcience, on every ſuch act, receive a wound itſelf?—Ay—But the man has carried it to confeſſion, the wound digeſts there, and will do well enough, —and in a ſhort time be quite healed up by abſolution.

O Popery! what haſt thou to anſwer for? —when not content with the too many natural and fatal ways through which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itſelf above all things,—thou haſt wilfully ſet open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary Traveller,—too apt, God knows, to go aſtray of himſelf,—and confidently ſpeak peace to his ſoul, when there is no peace.

Of this the common inſtances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impoſſible for man to be ſuch a bubble to himſelf,— I muſt refer him a moment to his reflections, and ſhall then venture to truſt the appeal with his own heart. Let him conſider in how different a degree of deteſtation numbers of wicked actions ſtand *there*, though equally bad and vicious in their own natures —he will ſoon find that ſuch of them as ſtrong inclination or cuſtom have prompted

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him to commit, are generally dreſs'd out and painted with all the falſe beauties which a ſoft and flattering hand can give them; and that the others to which he feels no propenſity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, ſurrounded with all the true circumſtances of folly and diſhonour.

When David ſurpriſed Saul ſleeping in the cave, and cut off the ſkirt of his robe,—we read, his heart ſmote him for what he had done.—But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant ſervant, whom he ought to have loved and honour'd, fell to make way for his luſt; where *Conſcience* had ſo much greater reaſon to take the alarm,—his heart ſmote him not.—A whole year had almoſt paſſed from the firſt commiſſion of that crime,—to the time Nathan was ſent to reprove him: and we read not once of the leaſt ſorrow or compunction of heart which he teſtified during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus Conſcience, this once able monitor,—placed on high as a judge within us,—and intended, by our Maker, as a juſt and equitable one too,—by an unhappy train of cauſes and impediments,—takes often ſuch imperfect cognizance of what paſſes,—does its office ſo negligently,—ſometimes ſo corruptly, that it is not to be truſted alone: and therefore we find, there is a neceſſity, an abſolute neceſſity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern, its determinations.

So that if you would form a juſt judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be miſled in, namely, in what degree of real merit you ſtand, either as an honeſt man, —an uſeful citizen,—a faithful ſubject to your king,—or a good ſervant to your God—call in Religion and Morality.—Look—What is written in the law of God?—How readeſt thou?—Conſult calm reaſon, and the unchangeable obligations of juſtice and truth, —What ſay they?

Let Conſcience determine the matter upon theſe reports,—and then, if "thy heart con-'demn thee not,"—which is the caſe the Apoſtle ſuppoſes,—the rule will be infallible —"Thou wilt have confidence towards God;" —that is, have juſt grounds to believe the judgment thou haſt paſt upon thyſelf, *is* the judgment of God; and nothing elſe but an anticipation of that righteous ſentence, which will be pronounced, hereafter, upon thee by that Being, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

"Bleſſed is the man," indeed then, as the Author of the book of Eccleſiaſticus expreſſes it, "who is not pricked with the "multitude of his ſins.—Bleſſed is the man "whoſe heart hath not condemned him, "and who is not fallen from his hope in the "Lord. Whether he be rich," continues he, "or whether he be poor,—if he have a good "heart" (a heart thus guided and informed) "—He ſhall at all times rejoice in a cheerful "coun-

" countenance—His mind ſhall tell him more " than ſeven watchmen that ſit above upon " a tower on high."—In the darkeſt doubts it ſhall conduct him ſafer than a thouſand Caſuiſts, and give the ſtate he lives in a better ſecurity for his behaviour, than all the clauſes and reſtrictions put together, which the wiſdom of the legiſlature is forced to multiply,—forced, I ſay, as things ſtand; human laws being not a matter of original choice, but of pure neceſſity, brought in to fence againſt the miſchevious effects of thoſe Conſciences which are no law unto themſelves: wiſely intending by the many proviſions made, That in all ſuch corrupt or miſguided caſes, where principle and the checks of Conſcience will not make us upright,—— to ſupply their force, and by the terrors of jails and halters oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal meaſures of right and wrong:—the firſt of theſe will comprehend the duties of religion: the ſecond thoſe of morality: which are ſo inſeparably connected together, that you cannot divide theſe two *Tables*, even in imagination (though the attempt is often made in practice), without breaking and mutually deſtroying them both.

I ſaid the attempt is often made;—and ſo it is;—there being nothing more common than to ſee a man, who has no ſenſe at all of religion,—and indeed has *ſo much* of honeſty,

as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bitterest affront, should you but hint at a suspicion of his moral character,—or imagine he was not conscientiously just and scrupulous to the uttermost mite.

When there is some appearance that it is so, —though one is not willing even to suspect the appearance of so great a virtue, as moral honesty;—yet were we to look into the grounds of it in the present case, I am persuaded we should find little reason to envy such a man the honour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompously as he can on the subject, it will be found at last to rest upon no better foundation than either his interest, his pride, his ease, or some such little and changeable passion as will give us but small dependence upon his actions in matters of great stress.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an example.

I know the banker I deal with, or the physician I usually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion: I hear them make a jest of it every day, and treat all its sanctions with so much scorn and contempt, as to put the matter past doubt. Well, notwithstanding this I put my fortune into the hands of the one,—and, what is dearer still to me, I trust my life to the honest skill of the other.—Now, let me examine what is my reason for this great confidence.—Why,—in the first place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power,

power, I put into their hands, to my diſadvantage. I conſider that honeſty ſerves the purpoſes of this life,—I know their ſucceſs in the world depends upon the fairneſs of their character;—that they cannot hurt me without hurting themſelves more.

But put it otherwiſe, namely, that intereſt lay for once on the other ſide.—That a caſe ſhould happen wherein the one without ſtain to his reputation, could ſecrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world:—or that the other could ſend me out of it, and enjoy an eſtate by my death, without diſhonour to himſelf or his art—In this caſe what hold have I of either of them?—Religion, the ſtrongeſt of all motives, is out of the queſtion.—Intereſt, the next moſt powerful motive in this world, is ſtrongly againſt me.—I have nothing left to caſt into the ſcale to balance this temptation.——I muſt lie at the mercy of honour,——or ſome ſuch capricious principle.——Strait ſecurity! for two of my beſt and moſt valuable bleſſings,——my property and my life!

As therefore we can have no dependence upon morality without religion;—ſo on the other hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality; nor can any man be ſuppoſed to diſcharge his duties to God, (whatever fair appearances he may hang out, that he does ſo,) if he does not pay as conſcientious a regard to the duties which he owes his fellow-creature.

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This is a point capable in itſelf of ſtrict demonſtration.—Nevertheleſs, 'tis no rarity to ſee a man whoſe real moral merit ſtands very low, who yet entertains the higheſt notion of himſelf, in the light of a devout and religious man. He ſhall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable,—but even wanting in points of common honeſty.—Yet becauſe he talks loud againſt the infidelity of the age,—is zealous for ſome points of religion,—goes twice a day to church, attends the ſacraments, and amuſes himſelf with a few inſtrumental duties of religion,—ſhall cheat his conſcience into a judgment that for this he is a religious man, and has diſcharged faithfully his duty to God: and you will find that ſuch a man, through force of this deluſion, generally looks down with ſpiritual pride upon every other man who has leſs affectation of piety, though, perhaps, ten times more moral honeſty than himſelf.

"This is likewiſe a ſore evil under the ſun;" and I believe there is no one miſtaken principle which, for its time, has wrought more ſerious miſchiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the hiſtory of the Romiſh church. —See what ſcenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodſhed, have all been ſanctified by a religion not ſtrictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the cruſading ſword of this miſguided Saint-Errant ſpared neither age, or merit, or ſex, or condition!—And, as he fought under the banners

banners of a religion, which ſet him looſe from juſtice and humanity,—he ſhewed none, —mercileſsly trampled upon both, heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their diſtreſſes.

If the teſtimony of paſt centuries in this matter is not ſufficient,—conſider at this inſtant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do ſervice and honour to God, by actions which are diſhonour and ſcandal to themſelves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the priſons of the inquiſition. Behold *Religion* with mercy and juſtice chain'd down under her feet,—there ſitting ghaſtly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and inſtruments of torment.—Hark!—What a piteous groan!—See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, juſt brought forth to undergo the anguiſh of a mock-trial, and endure the utmoſt pains that a ſtudied ſyſtem of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpleſs victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body ſo waſted with ſorrow and long confinement, you'll ſee every nerve and muſcle as it ſuffers.—Obſerve the laſt movement of that horrid engine.—What convulſions it has thrown him into. Conſider the nature the poſture in which he now lies ſtretch'd.—What exquiſite torture he endures by it.—'Tis all nature can bear.——Good God! ſee how it keeps his weary ſoul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,—but not ſuffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch

wretch led back to his cell,—dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,—and the inſults in his laſt agonies, which this principle—this principle that there can be religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The ſureſt way to try the merit of any diſputed notion,—is to trace down the conſequences ſuch a notion has produced, and compare them with the *ſpirit* of Chriſtianity. —'Tis the ſhort and deciſive rule, which our Saviour has left for theſe and ſuch like caſes, —and is worth a thouſand arguments.—"By "their fruits," ſays he, "ye ſhall know them."

Thus religion and morality, like faſt friends and natural allies, can never be ſet at variance, without the mutual ruin and diſhonour of them both;—and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wiſher to either, —and whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality, as well as his religion, will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this diſcourſe, than by two or three ſhort and independent rules, deducible from what has been ſaid.

1ſt, Whenever a man talks loudly againſt religion, always ſuſpect that it is not his reaſon, but his paſſions which have got the better of his creed.—A *bad life* and a *good belief* are diſagreeable and troubleſome neighbours, and where they ſeparate, depend upon it, 'tis for no other cauſe but quietneſs ſake.

2dly, When a man thus repreſented, tells you in any particular inſtance, that ſuch a thing

thing goes *againſt* his conſcience,—always believe he means exactly the ſame thing as when he tells you ſuch a thing goes againſt his ſtomach,—a preſent want of appetite being generally the true cauſe of both.

In a word,—truſt that man in nothing,—who has not a conſcience in every thing.

And in your own caſe remember this plain diſtinction, a miſtake which has ruin'd thouſands—That your conſcience is not a law;—no,—God and reaſon made the law, and has placed Conſcience within you to determine,—not like an *Aſiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own paſſions; but like a *Britiſh judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,—but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.

SERMON XXVIII.

TEMPORAL ADVANTAGES OF RELIGION.

PROVERBS, III. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.

THERE are two opinions which the inconſiderate are apt to take upon truſt.—The firſt is—a vicious life, is a life of liberty, pleaſure, and happy advantages.—The ſecond is—and which is the converſe of the firſt—that a religious life is a ſervile and moſt uncomfortable ſtate.

The firſt breach which the devil made upon human innocence, was by the help of the firſt of theſe ſuggeſtions, when he told Eve, that by eating of the tree of knowledge, ſhe ſhould be as God, that is, ſhe ſhould reap ſome high and ſtrange felicity from doing what was forbidden her.—But I need not repeat the ſucceſs—Eve learnt the difference between good and evil by her tranſgreſſion, which ſhe knew not before—but then ſhe fatally learnt at the ſame time, that the difference was only this—that good is that which can only give the mind pleaſure and comfort—and that evil is that, which muſt neceſſarily be attended ſooner or later with ſhame and ſorrow.

As the deceiver of mankind thus began his triumph over our race—ſo has he carried it on

on ever ſince by the very ſame argument of deluſion.—That is, by poſſeſſing men's minds early with great expectations of the preſent incomes of ſin,—making them dream of wondrous gratifications they are to feel in following their appetites in a forbidden way —making them fancy, that their own grapes yield not ſo delicious a taſte as their neighbour's, and that they ſhall quench their thirſt with more pleaſure at his fountain, than at their own. This is the opinion which at firſt too generally prevails—till experience and proper ſeaſons of reflection make us all at one time or other confeſs—that our counſellor has been (as from the beginning) an impoſtor—and that inſtead of fulfilling theſe hopes of gain and ſweetneſs in what is forbidden— that, on the contrary, every unlawful enjoyment leads only to bitterneſs and loſs.

The ſecond opinion, or, That a religious life is a ſervile and uncomfortable ſtate, has proved a no leſs fatal and capital falſe principle in the conduct of unexperience through life—the foundation of which miſtake ariſing chiefly from this previous wrong judgment—that true happineſs and freedom lye in a man's always following his own humour—that to live by moderate and preſcribed rules, is to live without joy—that not to proſecute our paſſions is to be cowards—and to forego every thing for the tedious diſtance of a future life.

Was it true, that a virtuous man could have no pleaſure but what ſhould ariſe from

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that remote proſpect—I own we are by nature ſo goaded on by the deſire of preſent happineſs, that was that the caſe, thouſands would faint under the diſcouragement of ſo remote an expectation.—But in the mean time the Scriptures give us a very different proſpect of this matter.—There we are told that the ſervice of God is true liberty—that the yoke of Chriſtianity is eaſy, in compariſon of that yoke which muſt be brought upon us by any other ſyſtem of living,—and the text tells of wiſdom—by which he means Religion, that it has pleaſantneſs in its way, as well as glory in its end—that it will bring us peace and joy, ſuch as the world cannot give.—So that upon examining the truth of this aſſertion, we ſhall be ſet right in this error, by ſeeing that a religious man's happineſs does not ſtand at ſo tedious a diſtance—but is ſo preſent, and indeed ſo inſeparable from him, as to be felt and taſted every hour—and of this even the vicious can hardly be inſenſible, from what he may perceive to ſpring up in his mind, from any caſual act of virtue. And though it is a pleaſure that properly belongs to the good—yet let any one try the experiment, and he will ſee what is meant by that moral delight ariſing from the conſcience of well-doing.—Let him but refreſh the bowels of the needy—let him comfort the broken-hearted—or check an appetite, or overcome a temptation—or receive an affront with temper and meekneſs—and he ſhall find the tacit praiſe of what he has done, darting through his mind, accom-

panied with a ſincere pleaſure—conſcience playing the monitor even to the looſe and moſt inconſiderate, in their moſt caſual acts of well-doing, and is, like a voice whiſpering behind and ſaying—this is the way of pleaſantneſs,—this is the path of peace—walk in it.—

But to do further juſtice to the text, we muſt look beyond this inward recompence which is always inſeparable from virtue,—and take a view of the outward advantages, which are as inſeparable from it, and which the apoſtle particularly refers to, when 'tis ſaid, Godlineſs has the promiſe of this life, as well as that which is to come—and in this argument it is, that religion appears in all its glory and ſtrength—unanſwerable in all its obligations—that beſides the principal work which it does for us in ſecuring our future well-being in the other world, it is likewiſe the moſt effectual means to promote our preſent—and that not only *morally*, upon account of that reward which virtuous actions do entitle a man unto from a juſt and a wiſe Providence,—but by a natural tendency in themſelves, which the duties of religion have *to procure* us riches, health, reputation, credit, and all thoſe things, wherein our temporal happineſs is thought to conſiſt, and this not only in promoting the well-being of particular perſons, but of public communities and of mankind in general,—agreeable to what the wiſe man has left us on record, that righteouſneſs exalteth a nation:—inſomuch, that could

we, in conſidering this argument, ſuppoſe ourſelves to be in a capacity of expoſtulating with God, concerning the terms upon which we would ſubmit to his government,—and to chuſe the laws ourſelves which we would be bound to obſerve, it would be impoſſible for the wit of man to frame any other propoſals, which upon all accounts would be more advantageous to our own intereſts than thoſe very conditions to which we are obliged by the rules of religion and virtue.—And in this does the reaſonableſs of Chriſtianity, and the beauty and wiſdom of Providence, appear moſt eminently towards mankind, in governing us by ſuch laws as do moſt apparently tend to make us happy,—and in a word, in making that (in his mercy) to be our duty, which in his wiſdom he knows to be our intereſt,—that is to ſay, what is moſt conducive to the eaſe and comfort of our mind,—the health and ſtrength of our body,—the honour and proſperity of our ſtate and condition,—the friendſhip and good-will of our fellow-creatures;—to the attainment of all which, no more effectual means can poſſibly be made uſe of, than that plain direction,—to lead an uncorrupted life, and to do the thing which is right, to uſe no deceit in our tongue, nor do evil to our neighbour.

For the better imprinting of which truth in your memories, give me leave to offer a few things to your conſideration.

The firſt is,—that juſtice and honeſty contribute very much towards all the faculties of

of the mind: I mean, that it clears up the underſtanding from that miſt, which dark and crooked deſigns are apt to raiſe in it,—and that it keeps up a regularity in the affections, by ſuffering no luſts or *by-ends* to diſorder them.—That it likewiſe preſerves the mind from all damps of grief and melancholy, which are the ſure conſequences of unjuſt actions; and that by ſuch an improvement of the faculties, it makes a man ſo much the abler to diſcern, and ſo much the more cheerful, active, and diligent to mind his buſineſs. —Light is ſown for the righteous, ſays the prophet, and gladneſs for the upright in heart.

Secondly, let it be obſerved,—that in the continuance and courſe of a virtuous man's affairs, there is little probability of his falling into conſiderable diſappointments or calamities;—not only becauſe guarded by the providence of God, but that honeſty is in its own nature the freeſt from danger.

Firſt, becauſe ſuch a one lays no projects, which it is the intereſt of another to blaſt, and therefore needs no indirect methods or deceitful practices to ſecure his intereſt by undermining others.—The paths of virtue are plain and ſtraight, ſo that the blind, perſons of the meaneſt capacity, ſhall not err.—Diſhoneſty requires ſkill to conduct it, and as great art to conceal—what 'tis every one's intereſt to detect. And I think I need not remind you how oft it happens in attempts of this kind—where worldly men, in haſte to be rich, have over-run the only means to it,—

and for want of laying their contrivances with proper cunning, or managing them with proper ſecrecy and advantage, have loſt for ever what they might have certainly ſecured by honeſty and plain-dealing.—The general cauſes of the diſappointments in their buſineſs, or of unhappineſs in their lives, lying but too manifeſtly in their own diſorderly paſſions, which by attempting to carry them a ſhorter way to riches and honour, diſappoint them of both for ever, and make plain their ruin is from themſelves, and that they eat the fruits which their own hands have watered and ripened.

Conſider, in the third place, that as the religious and moral man (one of which he cannot be without the other) not only takes the ſureſt courſe for ſucceſs in his affairs, but is diſpoſed to procure a help, which never enters into the thoughts of a wicked one; for being conſcious of upright intentions, he can look towards heaven, and with ſome aſſurance recommend his affairs to God's bleſſing and direction;—whereas the fraudulent and diſhoneſt man dares not call for God's bleſſing upon his deſigns,—or if he does, he knows it is in vain to expect it.—Now a man who believes that he has God on his ſide, acts with another ſort of life and courage, than he who knows he ſtands alone;—like Eſau, with his hand againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt his.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry, but the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil.

Conſider,

Conſider, in the fourth place, that in all good governments who underſtand their own intereſt, the upright and honeſt man ſtands much fairer for preferment, and much more likely to be employed in all things when fidelity is wanted:—for all men, however the caſe ſtands with themſelves, they love at leaſt to find honeſty in thoſe they truſt; nor is there any uſage we more hardly digeſt, than that of being outwitted and deceived.—This is ſo true an obſervation, that the greateſt knaves have no other way to get into buſineſs, but by counterfeiting honeſty, and pretending to be what they are not; and when the impoſture is diſcovered, as it is a thouſand to one but it will, I have juſt ſaid, what muſt be the certain conſequence:—for when ſuch a one falls,—he has none to help him, ſo he ſeldom riſes again.

This brings us to a fifth particular, in vindication of the text,—That a virtuous man has this ſtrong advantage on his ſide (the reverſe of the laſt), that the more and the longer he is known, ſo much the better he is loved, ſo much the more truſted;—ſo that his reputation and his fortune have a gradual increaſe:—and if calamities or croſs accidents ſhould bear him down,—(as no one ſtands out of their reach in this world)—if he ſhould fall, who would not pity his diſtreſs,—who would not ſtretch forth his hand to raiſe him from the ground?—wherever there was virtue, he might expect to meet a friend and brother.—And this is not merely ſpeculation, but fact, confirmed by numberleſs examples in life, of men

falling into misfortunes, whoſe character and tried probity have raiſed them helps, and bore them up, when every other help has forſook them.

Laſtly, to ſum up the account of the temporal advantages which probity has on its ſide, —let us not forget that greateſt of all happineſs, which the text refers to—in the expreſſion of all its paths being peace, peace and content of mind, ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of virtue, which is the true and only foundation of all earthly ſatisfaction; and where that is wanting, whatever other enjoyments you beſtow upon a wicked man, they will as ſoon add a cubit to his ſtature as to his happineſs. —In the midſt of the higheſt entertainments, —this, like the hand-writing upon the wall, will be enough to ſpoil and diſreliſh the feaſt; but much more ſo, when the tumult and hurry of delight is over,—when all is ſtill and ſilent, when the ſinner has nothing to do but attend its laſhes and remorſes;—and this, in ſpite of all the common arts of diverſion, will be often the caſe of every wicked man;—for we cannot live always upon the ſtretch;—our faculties will not bear conſtant pleaſure any more than conſtant pain;—there will be ſome vacancies; and when there are, they will be ſure to be filled with uncomfortable thoughts and black reflections.—So that, ſetting aſide the great after-reckoning, the pleaſures of the wicked are overbought, even in this world.—

I conclude with one obſervation upon the whole of this argument, which is this.—

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding the great force with which it has been often urged by good writers, there are many caſes which it may not reach, wherein vicious men may ſeem to enjoy their portion of this life, and live as happy, and fall into as few troubles as other men;—and therefore it is prudent not to lay more ſtreſs upon this argument than it will bear:—but always remember to call in to our aid, that great and more unanſwerable argument, which will anſwer the moſt doubtful caſes which can be ſtated,—and that is, certainty of a future life, which Chriſtianity has brought to light. However men may differ in their opinions of the uſefulneſs of virtue for our preſent purpoſes, no one was ever ſo abſurd as to deny it ſerved our beſt and our laſt intereſt,—when the little intereſts of this life were at an end:—upon which conſideration we ſhould always lay the great weight which it is fitteſt to bear, as the ſtrongeſt appeal, and moſt unchangeable motive that can govern our actions at all times.—However, as every good argument on the ſide of religion ſhould in proper times be made uſe of,—it is fit ſometimes to examine this,—by proving virtue is not even deſtitute of a preſent reward,—but carries in her hand a ſufficient recompence for all the ſelf-denials ſhe may occaſion:—ſhe is pleaſant in the way, as well as in the end;—her ways being ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace.—But it is her greateſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed glory,—that

ſhe befriends us hereafter, and brings us peace at the laſt; and this is a portion ſhe can never be diſinherited of, — which may God of his mercy grant us all, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt.

SERMON XXIX.

OUR CONVERSATION IN HEAVEN.

Phillippians, iii. 20.

Why, the only effect would be, that the fat Glutton wou'd stare awhile upon the Preacher, and in a few minutes fall fast asleep.

SERMON XXIX.

OUR CONVERSATION IN HEAVEN.

PHILIP. III. 20. 1ſt Part.

For our converſation is in Heaven.

THESE words are the concluſion of the accounts which St. Paul renders of himſelf, to juſtify that particular part of his conduct and proceeding, — his leaving ſo ſtrangely, and deſerting his Jewiſh rites and ceremonies, to which he was known to have been formerly ſo much attached, and in defence of which he had been ſo warmly and ſo remarkably engaged. This, as it had been matter of provocation againſt him amongſt his own countrymen the Jews, ſo was it no leſs an occaſion of ſurpriſe to the Gentiles;—that a perſon of his great character, intereſt, and reputation, one who was deſcended from a tribe of Iſrael, deeply ſkilled in the profeſſions, and zealous in the "obſervances of the ſtraiteſt ſect of that "religion;" who had their tenets inſtilled into him from his tender years, under the inſtitution of the ableſt maſters; — a Phariſee himſelf,——the ſon of a Phariſee, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, one that was ſo deeply intereſted, and an acceſſary in the perſecution of another religion, juſt then newly come up;—a religion to which

which his whole ſect, as well as himſelf, had been always the bittereſt and moſt inveterate enemies, and were conſtantly upbraided as ſuch by the firſt founder of it;—that a perſon ſo beſet and hemm'd in with intereſts and prejudices on all ſides, ſhould after all turn proſelyte to the very religion he had hated!—a religion too, under the moſt univerſal contempt of any then in the world,—the chiefs and leaders of it men of the loweſt birth and education, without any advantages of parts or learning, or other endowments to recommend them:—that he ſhould quit and abandon all his former privileges, to become merely a fellow-labourer with theſe,— that he ſhould give up the reputation he had acquired amongſt his brethren by the ſtudy and labours of a whole life;—that he ſhould give up his friends,—his relations and family, from whom he eſtranged and baniſhed himſelf for life;—this was an event ſo very extraordinary, ſo odd and unaccountable,—that it might well confound the minds of men to anſwer for it.— It was not to be accounted for upon the common rules and meaſures of proceeding in human life.——

The apoſtle, therefore, ſince no one elſe could do it ſo well for him, comes in this chapter, to give an explanation why he had thus forſaken ſo many worldly advantages,—which was owing to a greater and more unconquerable affection to a better and more valuable intereſt, that in the poor perſecuted faith,—which he had once reproached and deſtroyed,—

deſtroyed,—he had now found ſuch a fulneſs of divine grace,—ſuch unfathomable depths of God's infinite mercy and love towards mankind, that he could think nothing too much to part with in order to his embracing Chriſtianity;—nay, he accounted all things but loſs,—that is, leſs than nothing, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt.

The Apoſtle, after this apology for himſelf, proceeds, in the ſecond verſe before the text, to give a very different repreſentation of the worldly views and ſenſual principles of other pretending teachers,—who had ſet themſelves up as an example for men to walk by, againſt whom he renews this caution:—For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies to the croſs of Chriſt,—whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, and whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things,—Φρονουντες,—reliſh them, making them the only object of their wiſhes, taking aim at nothing better, and nothing higher,—but *our* converſation, ſays he in the text, is in heaven. We Chriſtians, who have embraced a perſecuted faith, are governed by other conſiderations,—have greater and nobler views; here we conſider ourſelves only as pilgrims and ſtrangers.—Our home is in another country, where we are continually tending; there our hearts and affections are placed; and when the few days of our pilgrimage ſhall be over, there ſhall we return, where a quiet habitation and a perpe-

perpetual reſt is deſigned and prepared for us for ever.—Our converſation is in heaven, from whence, ſays he, we alſo look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto him.—It is obſervable, that St. Peter repreſents the ſtate of Chriſtians under the ſame image, of ſtrangers on earth, whoſe city and proper home is heaven:—he makes uſe of that relation of citizens of heaven, as a ſtrong argument for a pure and holy life,—beſeeching them *as* pilgrims and ſtrangers *here*, as men whoſe intereſts and connections are of ſo ſhort a date, and ſo trifling a nature,—to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul, that is, unfit it for its heavenly country, and give it a diſreliſh to the enjoyment of that pure and ſpiritualized happineſs, of which that religion muſt conſiſt, wherein there ſhall in no wiſe enter any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abomination.—The Apoſtle tells us, that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee God;—by which no doubt he means, that a virtuous life is the only medium of happineſs and terms of ſalvation, which can only give us admiſſion into heaven.—But ſome of our divines carry the aſſertion further, that without holineſs,—without ſome previous ſimilitude wrought in the faculties of the mind, correſponding with the nature of the pureſt of beings, who is to be the object of our fruition

tion hereafter;—that it is not morally only, but phyſically impoſſible for it to be happy,—and that an impure and polluted ſoul is not only unworthy of ſo pure a preſence as the ſpirit of God, but even incapable of enjoying it, could it be admitted.

And here, not to feign a long hypotheſis, as ſome have done, of a ſinner's being admitted into heaven, with a particular deſcription of his condition and behaviour there,—we need only conſider, that the ſupreme good, like any other good, is of a relative nature, and conſequently the enjoyment of it muſt require ſome qualification in the faculty, as well as the enjoyment of any other good does;—there muſt be ſomething antecedent in the diſpoſition and temper, which will render that good a good to that individual,—otherwiſe though (it is true) it may be poſſeſſed,—yet it never can be enjoyed.——

Preach to a voluptuous epicure, who knows of no other happineſs in this world but what ariſes from good eating and drinking;—ſuch a one, in the Apoſtle's language, whoſe God was his belly;—preach to him of the abſtractions of the ſoul, tell of its flights, and briſker motion in the pure regions of immenſity;—repreſent to him that ſaints and angels eat not,—but that the ſpirit of a man lives for ever upon wiſdom and holineſs, and heavenly contemplations:—why, the only effect would be, that the fat glutton would ſtare a while upon the preacher, and in a few minutes fall faſt aſleep.—No; if you would catch his attention,

attention, and make him take in your diſcourſe greedily,—you muſt preach to him out of the Alcoran,—talk of the raptures of ſenſual enjoyments, and of the pleaſures of the perpetual feaſting, which Mahomet has deſcribed;—there you touch upon a note which awakens and ſinks into the inmoſt receſſes of his ſoul;—without which, diſcourſe as wiſely and abſtractedly as you will of heaven, your repreſentations of it, however glorious and exalted, will paſs like the ſongs of melody over an ear incapable of diſcerning the diſtinction of ſounds.

We ſee, even in the common intercourſes of ſociety,—how tedious it is to be in the company of a perſon whoſe humour is diſagreeable to our own, though perhaps in all other reſpects of the greateſt worth and excellency.—How then can we imagine that an ill-diſpoſed ſoul, whoſe converſation never reached to heaven, but whoſe appetites and deſires, to the laſt hour, have grovell'd upon this unclean ſpot of earth;—how can we imagine it ſhould hereafter take pleaſure in God, or be able to taſte joy or ſatisfaction from his preſence, who is ſo infinitely pure that he even putteth no truſt in his ſaints,—nor are the heavens themſelves (as Job ſays) clean in his ſight?—The conſideration of this has led ſome writers ſo far as to ſay, with ſome degree of irreverence in the expreſſion,—that it was not in the power of God to make a wicked man happy, if the ſoul was ſeparated from the body, with all its vicious habits and inclinations

clinations unreformed; — which thought a very able divine in our church has purſued ſo far as to declare his belief,— that could the happieſt manſion in heaven be ſuppoſed to be allotted to a groſs and polluted ſpirit, it would be ſo far from being happy in it, that it would do penance there to all eternity: —by which he meant, it would carry ſuch appetites along with it, for which there could be found no ſuitable objects.—A ſufficient cauſe for conſtant torment;—for thoſe that it found there would be ſo diſproportioned, that they would rather vex and upbraid it, than ſatisfy its wants.—This, it is true, is mere ſpeculation,—and what concerns us not to know;—it being enough for our purpoſe, that ſuch an experiment is never likely to be tried,—that we ſtand upon different terms with God,—that a virtuous life is the foundation of all our happineſs,—that as God has no pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall any evil dwell with him;—and that, if we expect our happineſs to be in heaven, we muſt have our converſation in heaven, whilſt upon earth, make it the frequent ſubject of our thoughts and meditations, let every ſtep we take tend that way,—every action of our lives be conducted by that great mark of the prize of our high calling, forgetting thoſe things which are behind;—forgetting this world,—diſengaging our thoughts and affections from it, and thereby, transforming them to the likeneſs of what we hope to be hereafter.—How can we expect the inheritance of the ſaints

of

of light, upon other terms than what they themſelves obtained it?——

Can that body expect to riſe and ſhine in glory, that is a ſlave to luſt, or dies in the fiery purſuit of an impure deſire? Can that heart ever become the lightſome ſeat of peace and joy, that burns hot as an oven with anger, rage, envy, luſt, and ſtrife, full of wicked imaginations, ſet only to deviſe and entertain evil?

Can that fleſh appear in the laſt day and inherit the kingdom of Heaven in the glorified ſtrength of perpetual youth, that is now clearly conſumed in intemperance, ſinks in the ſurfeit of continual drunkenneſs and gluttony, and then tumbles into the grave, and almoſt pollutes the ground that is under it?—Can we reaſonably ſuppoſe that head ſhall ever wear or become the crown of righteouſneſs and peace, in which dwells nothing but craft and avarice, deceit and fraud and treachery,—which is always plodding upon worldly deſigns, racked with ambition,—rent aſunder with diſcord,—ever delighting in miſchief to others, and unjuſt advantages to itſelf?—Shall that tongue which is the glory of a man when rightly directed,—be ever ſet to God's heavenly praiſes, and warble forth the harmonies of the bleſſed, that is now full of curſing and bitterneſs, back-biting and ſlander, under which is ungodlineſs and vanity and the poiſon of aſps?

Can it enter into our hearts even to hope, that thoſe hands can ever receive the reward

of

of righteouſneſs, that are full of blood, laden with the wages of iniquity, of theft, rapine, violence, extortion, or other unlawful gain? or that thoſe feet ſhall ever be beautiful upon the mountains of light and joy, that were never ſhod for the preparation of the goſpel,—that have run quite out of the way of God's word,—and made haſte only to do evil?—No ſurely.—In this ſenſe,—he that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill, and he which is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.

How inconſiſtent the whole body of ſin is with the glories of the celeſtial body that ſhall be revealed hereafter,—and that in proportion as we fix the repreſentation of theſe glories upon our minds, and in the more numerous particulars we do it,—the ſtronger the neceſſity as well as perſuaſion to deny ourſelves all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world, as the only way to entitle us to that bleſſedneſs ſpoken of in the Revelations—of thoſe who do his commandments, and have a right to the tree of life, and ſhall enter into the gates of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels—to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, that are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect,—who have waſhed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

May God give us grace to live under the perpetual influence of this expectation,—that by the habitual impreſſion of theſe glories upon our imaginations, and the frequent ſending forth our thoughts and employing them on the other world—we may diſentangle them from this,—and by ſo having our converſation in heaven whilſt we are here, we may be thought fit inhabitants for it hereafter,—that when God at the laſt day ſhall come with thouſands and ten thouſands of his ſaints to judge the world, we may enter with them into happineſs, and with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we may praiſe and magnify his glorious name, and enjoy his preſence for ever.

SERMON XXX.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD.

2 PETER, III. 11.

Seeing, then, that all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved,—what manner of perſons ought ye to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs? looking and haſtening unto the coming of God.

THE ſubject upon which St. Peter is diſcourſing in this chapter, is the certainty of Chriſt's coming to judge the world;—and the words of the text are the moral application he draws from the repreſentation he gives of it,—in which, in anſwer to the cavils of the ſcoffers in the latter days, concerning the delay of his coming, he tells them, that God is not ſlack concerning his promiſes, as ſome men count ſlackneſs, but is long ſuffering to us ward;—"that the day of the Lord will "come as a thief in the night, in which the "heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, "and the elements ſhall melt with fervent "heat; the earth alſo, and the works that "are therein ſhall be burnt up."—Seeing then, ſays he, all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of perſons ought ye to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs?—The inference is unavoidable,—at leaſt in theory, however it fails in practice;—how widely theſe two differ, I intend to make the ſubject of this diſcourſe; and though it is a melan-

choly compariſon, to conſider, 'what manner of perſons we *really* are,' with 'what manner 'of perſons we *ought* to be,' yet as the knowledge of the one is at leaſt one ſtep towards the improvement in the other,—the parallel will not be thought to want its uſe.

Give me leave, therefore, in the firſt place, to recal to your obſervations, what kind of world it is we live in, and what manner of perſons we really are.

Secondly, and in oppoſition to this, I ſhall make uſe of the apoſtle's argument, and, from a brief repreſentation of the Chriſtian religion, and the obligations it lays upon us, ſhew, what manner of perſons we *ought* to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs, looking for and haſtening unto the coming of the day of God.

Whoever takes a view of the world, will, I fear, be able to diſcern but very faint marks of this character, either upon the looks or actions of its inhabitants.—Of all the ends and purſuits we are looking for, and haſtening unto,—this would be the leaſt ſuſpected,—for, without running into that old declamatory cant upon the wickedneſs of the age,—we may ſay within the bounds of truth,—that there is as little influence from this principle which the apoſtle lays ſtreſs on, and as little ſenſe of religion,—as ſmall a ſhare of virtue (at leaſt as little of the appearance of it) as can be ſuppoſed to exiſt at all in a country where it is countenanced by the ſtate.—The degeneracy of the times has been the common complaint of many ages:

ages:—how much we exceed our forefathers in this, is known alone to that God who trieth the hearts.—But this we may be allowed to urge in their favour, they ſtudied at leaſt to preſerve the appearance of virtue;—public vice was branded with public infamy, and obliged to hide its head in privacy and retirement. The ſervice of God was regularly attended, and religion not expoſed to the reproaches of the ſcorner.

How the caſe ſtands with us at preſent in each of theſe particulars, it is grievous to report, and perhaps unacceptable to Religion herſelf; yet as this is a ſeaſon wherein it is fit we ſhould be told of our faults, let us for a moment impartially conſider the articles of this charge.

And firſt, concerning the great article of religion, and the influence it has at preſent upon the lives and behaviour of the preſent times;—concerning which I have ſaid, that, if we are to truſt appearances, there is as little as can well be ſuppoſed to exiſt at all in a Chriſtian country. Here I ſhall ſpare exclamations, and, avoiding all common-place railing upon the ſubject, confine myſelf to facts, ſuch as every one who looks into the world, and makes any obſervations at all, will vouch for me.

Now whatever are the degrees of real religion amongſt us,—whatever they are, the appearances are ſtrong againſt the charitable ſide of the queſtion.—

If religion is any where to be found, one would think it would be amongſt thoſe of the higher rank in life, whoſe education, and opportunities of knowing its great importance, ſhould have brought them over to its intereſt, and rendered them as firm in the defence of it, as eminent in its example.—But if you examine the fact, you will almoſt find it a teſt of a politer education, and mark of more ſhining parts, to know nothing, and, indeed, care nothing at all about it:—or, if the ſubject happens to engage the attention of a few of the more ſprightly wits,—that it ſerves no other purpoſe but that of being made merry at, and of being reſerved as a ſtanding jeſt, to enliven diſcourſe, when converſation ſickens upon their hands.—

This is too ſore an evil not to be obſerved amongſt perſons of all ages, in what is called higher life; and ſo early does the contempt of this great concern begin to ſhew itſelf—that it is no uncommon thing to hear perſons diſputing againſt religion, and raiſing cavils againſt the Bible, at an age when ſome of them would be hard ſet to read a chapter in it.—And I may add, of thoſe whoſe ſtock in knowledge is ſomewhat larger, that for the moſt part it has ſcarce any other foundation to reſt on but the ſinking credit of traditional and ſcond-hand objections againſt revelation, which, had they leiſure to read, they would find anſwered and confuted a thouſand times over.—But this by the way.——

If

If we take a view of the public worſhip of Almighty God, and obſerve in what manner it is reverenced by perſons in this rank of life, whoſe duty it is to ſet an example to the poor and ignorant, we ſhall find concurring evidence upon this melancholy argument—of a general want of all outward demonſtration of a ſenſe of our duty towards God, as if religion was a buſineſs fit only to employ tradeſmen and mechanics—and the ſalvation of our ſouls, a concern utterly below the conſideration of a perſon of figure and conſequence.—

I ſhall ſay nothing at preſent of the lower ranks of mankind—though they have not yet got into the faſhion of laughing at religion, and treating it with ſcorn and contempt, and I believe are too ſerious a ſet of creatures ever to come into it; yet we are not to imagine but that the contempt it is held in by thoſe whoſe examples they are apt to imitate, will in time utterly ſhake their principles, and render them, if not as prophane, at leaſt as corrupt as their betters.—When this event happens—and we begin to *feel* the effects of it in our dealings with them, thoſe who have done the miſchief will find the neceſſity at laſt of turning religious in their own defence, and, for want of a better principle, to ſet an example of piety and good morals for their own intereſt and convenience.

Thus much for the languiſhing ſtate of religion in the preſent age;—in virtue and good morals perhaps the account may ſtand higher.——

Let us inquire——

And here I acknowledge, that an unexperienced man, who heard how loudly we all talked in behalf of virtue and moral honeſty, and how unanimous we were all in our cry againſt vicious characters of all denominations, would be apt haſtily to conclude, that the whole world was in an uproar about it—and that there was ſo general a horror and deteſtation of vice amongſt us, that mankind were all aſſociating together to hunt it out of the world, and give it no quarter.—This I own would be a natural concluſion for any one who only truſted his ears upon this ſubject.—But as matter of fact is allowed better evidence than hearſay—let us ſee in the preſent how the one caſe is contradicted by the other.—

However vehement we approve ourſelves in diſcourſe againſt vice—I believe no one is ignorant that the reception it actually meets with is very different—the conduct and behaviour of the world is ſo oppoſite to their language, and all we hear ſo contradicted by what we ſee, as to leave little room to queſtion which ſenſe we are to truſt.——

Look, I beſeech you, amongſt thoſe whoſe higher ſtations are made a ſhelter for the liberties they take, you will ſee, that no man's character is ſo infamous, nor any woman's ſo abandoned, as not to be viſited and admitted freely into all companies, and if the party can pay for it, even publicly to be courted, careſſed, and flattered.—If this will not overthrow the credit of our virtue,—take

a ſhort

a ſhort view of the general decay of it from the faſhionable exceſſes of the age,—in favour of which there ſeems to be formed ſo ſtrong a party, that a man of ſobriety, temperance, and regularity, ſcarce knows how to accommodate himſelf to the ſociety he lives in,—and is oft as much at a loſs how and where to diſpoſe of himſelf;—and unleſs you ſuppoſe a mixture of conſtancy in his temper, it is great odds but ſuch a one would be ridiculed, and laughed out of his ſcruples and his virtue at the ſame time:—to ſay nothing of occaſional rioting, chambering, and wantonneſs.—Conſider how many public markets are eſtabliſhed merely for the ſale of virtue,—where the manner of going too ſadly indicates the intention;—and the diſguiſe each is under, not only gives power ſafely to drive on the bargain, but too often tempts to carry it into execution too.—

The ſinning under diſguiſe, I own, ſeems to carry ſome appearance of a ſecret homage to virtue and decorum, and might be acknowledged as ſuch, was it not the only public inſtance the world ſeems to give of it. In other caſes, a juſt ſenſe of ſhame ſeems a matter of ſo little concern, that inſtead of any regularity of behaviour, you ſee thouſands who are tired with the very form of it, and who at length have even thrown the maſk of it aſide, as a uſeleſs piece of incumbrance.—This I believe will need no evidence, it is too evidently ſeen in the open liberties taken every day, in defiance (not to ſay of religion,

religion, but) of decency and common good manners;—ſo that it is no uncommon thing to behold vices which heretofore were committed only in dark corners, now openly ſhew their face in broad day, and oft-times with ſuch an air of triumph, as if the party thought he was doing himſelf honour,—or that he thought the deluding an unhappy creature, and the keeping her in a ſtate of guilt, was as neceſſary a piece of grandeur as the keeping an equipage,—and did him as much credit as any other appendage of his fortune.

If we paſs on from the vices to the indecorums of the age (which is a ſofter name for vices), you will ſcarce ſee any thing, in what is called higher life, but what beſpeaks a general relaxation of all order and diſcipline, in which our opinions as well as manners ſeem to be ſet looſe from all reſtraints;—and in truth, from all ſerious reflections too:—and one may venture to ſay, that gaming and extravagance to the utter ruin of the greateſt eſtates,—minds diſſipated with diverſions, and heads giddy with a perpetual rotation of them, are the moſt general characters to be met with; and though one would expect, that at leaſt the more ſolemn ſeaſons of the year, ſet apart for the contemplation of Chriſt's ſufferings, ſhould give ſome check and interruption to them, yet what appearance is there ever amongſt us, that it is ſo;—what one alteration does it make in the courſe of things? Is not the doctrine of mortification inſulted by the ſame luxury of entertainments

at

at our tables?—is not the ſame order of diverſions perpetually returning, and ſcarce any thing elſe thought of?—does not the ſame levity in dreſs, as well as diſcourſe, ſhew itſelf in perſons of all ages? I ſay of all ages, for it is no ſmall aggravation of the corruption of our morals, that age, which by its authority was once able to frown youth into ſobriety and better manners, and keep them within bounds, ſeems but too often to lead the way,—and by their unſeaſonable example give a countenance to follies and weakneſs, which youth is but too apt to run into without ſuch a recommendation.—Surely age,—which is but one remove from death, ſhould have nothing about it but what looks like a decent preparation for it.—In purer times it was the caſe,—but now,—grey hairs themſelves ſcarce ever appear, but in the high mode and flaunting garb of youth,—with heads as full of pleaſure, and clothes as ridiculouſly, and as much in the faſhion, as the perſon who wears them is uſually grown out of it;—upon which article give me leave to make a ſhort reflection; which is this, that whenever the eldeſt equal the youngeſt in the vanity of their dreſs, there is no reaſon to be given for it, but that they equal them, if not ſurpaſs them, in the vanity of their deſires.—

But this by the bye.—

Though in truth the obſervation falls in with the main attention of this diſcourſe,—which is not framed to flatter our follies, or touch them with a light hand, but plainly to point

point them out; that by recalling to your mind, what manner of perſons we really are, I might better lead you to the apoſtle's inference, of what manner of perſons ye ought to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs; looking for, and haſtening unto, the coming of the day of God.—

The apoſtle in the concluding verſe of this argument, exhorts, that they who look for ſuch things be diligent, that they be found of him in peace, without ſpot, and blameleſs; —and one may conclude with him, that if the hopes or fears, either the reaſon or the paſſions of men are to be wrought upon at all, it muſt be from the force and influence of this awakening conſideration in the text.—"That all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved;"—that this vain and periſhable ſcene muſt change, that we who now tread the ſtage, muſt ſhortly be ſummoned away;—that we are creatures but of a day, haſtening unto the place from whence we ſhall return no more;—that whilſt we are here,—our conduct and behaviour is minutely obſerved;—that there is a Being about our paths and about our beds, whoſe omniſcient eye ſpies out all our ways, and takes a faithful record of all the paſſages of our lives;—that theſe volumes ſhall be produced and opened, and men ſhall be judged out of the things that are written in them;—that without reſpect of perſons, we ſhall be made accountable for our thoughts, our words and actions, to this greateſt and beſt of Beings, before whoſe judgment-ſeat we muſt finally

appear, and receive the things done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are bad.—

That to add to the terror of it,—this day of the Lord will come upon us like a thief in the night;—of that hour no one knoweth;——that we are not ſure of its being ſuſpended one day or one hour; or, what is the ſame caſe,—that we are ſtanding upon the edge of a precipice with nothing but the ſingle thread of human life to hold us up;—and that if we fall unprepared in this thoughtleſs ſtate, we are loſt, and muſt periſh for evermore.—

What manner of perſons we ought to be, upon theſe principles of our religion, St. Peter has told us, in all holy converſation and godlineſs;—and I ſhall only remind, how different a frame of mind, the looking for and haſtening unto the coming of God, under ſuch a life, is, from that of ſpending our days in vanity, and our years in pleaſure.—

Give me leave, therefore to conclude in that merciful warning, which our Saviour, the Judge himſelf, hath given us at the cloſe of the ſame exhortation.—

Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be over-charged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life;—and ſo that day come upon you unawares;—for as a ſnare ſhall it come upon all that dwell on the face of the whole earth.—Watch therefore, and pray always, that

that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of man. Which may God of his mercy grant, through Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

ST. PETER'S CHARACTER.

ACTS, III. 12.

And when Peter ſaw it, he anſwered unto the people, Ye men of Iſrael, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye ſo earneſtly on us, as though by our own power or holineſs we had made this man to walk?

THESE words, as the text tells us, were ſpoke by St. Peter, on the occaſion of his miraculous cure of the lame man, who was laid at the gate of the temple, and, in the beginning of this chapter, had aſked an alms of St. Peter and St. John, as they went up together at the hour of prayer;—on whom St. Peter faſtening his eyes, as in the 4th verſe, and declaring he had no ſuch relief to give him as he expected, having neither ſilver nor gold,—but that ſuch as he had, the benefit of that divine power which he had received from his Maſter, he would impart to him,—he commands him forthwith, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth, to riſe up and walk.—And he took him by the hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ancle-bones received ſtrength; and he leaped up, ſtood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, leaping and praiſing God.—

It

It ſeems he had been born lame, had paſſed a whole life of deſpair, without hopes of ever being reſtored;—ſo that the immediate ſenſe of ſtrength and activity communicated to him at once, in ſo ſurpriſing and unſought-for a manner, caſt him into the tranſport of mind natural to a man ſo benefited beyond his expectation.—So that the amazing inſtance of a ſupernatural power;—the notoriety of fact, wrought at the hour of prayer;—the unexceptionableneſs of the object,—that it was no impoſture,—for they knew that it was he which ſat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple;—the unfeigned expreſſions of an enraptured heart almoſt beſide itſelf, confirming the whole;—the man that was healed, in the 10th verſe, holding his benefactors, Peter and John, entering into the temple with them, walking and leaping, and praiſing God;—the great concourſe of people, drawn together by this event, in the 11th verſe, for they all ran unto them, into the porch that was called Solomon's, greatly wondering. Sure never was ſuch a fair opportunity for an ambitious mind to have eſtabliſhed a character of ſuperior goodneſs and power.—To a man ſet upon this world, who ſought his own praiſe and honour, what an invitation would it have been to have turned theſe circumſtances to ſuch a purpoſe;—to have fallen in with the paſſions of an aſtoniſhed and grateful city, prepoſſeſſed, from what had happened, ſo ſtrongly in his favour already, that little art or ma-

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nagement was requiſite to have improved their wonder and good opinion into the higheſt reverence of his ſanctity, awe of his perſon, or whatever other belief ſhould be neceſſary to feed his pride, or ſerve ſecret ends of glory and intereſt.—A mind not ſufficiently mortified to the world, might have been tempted here to have taken the honour due to God—and transferred it to himſelf.—He might—not ſo—a diſciple of Chriſt: for when Peter ſaw it,—when he ſaw the propenſity in them to be miſled on this occaſion,—he anſwered and ſaid unto the people, in the words of the text,—Ye men of Iſrael, why marvel ye at this? or why look you ſo earneſtly on us, as though by our own power and holineſs we had made this man to walk?—The God of Abraham, and of Iſaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his ſon Jeſus.——

O holy and bleſſed apoſtle!

How would thy meek and mortified ſpirit ſatisfy itſelf in uttering ſo humble and ſo juſt a declaration?—What an honeſt triumph wouldſt thou taſte the ſweets of,—in thus conquering thy paſſion of vain-glory,—keeping down thy pride,—diſclaiming the praiſes which ſhould have fed it, by telling the wondering ſpectators, It was not thy own power,—it was not thy own holineſs, which had wrought this—thou being of like paſſions and infirmities;—but that it was the power of the God of Abraham,—the holineſs of thy dear Lord, whom they crucified, operating by faith

through thee, who waſt but an inſtrument in his hands.—If thus honeſtly declining honour, which the occaſion ſo amply invited thee to take;—if this would give more ſatisfaction to a mind like thine, than the loudeſt praiſes of a miſtaken people, what true rapture would be added to it from the reflection—that in this inſtance of ſelf-denial—thou hadſt not only done well,—but, what was ſtill a more endearing thought, that thou haſt been able to copy the example of thy divine Maſter, who, in no action of his life, ſought ever his own praiſe, but, on the contrary, declined all poſſible occaſions of it:—and in the only public inſtance of honour which he ſuffered to be given him in his entrance into Jeruſalem,—thou didſt remember,—it was accepted with ſuch a mixture of humility, that the prediction of the prophet was not more exactly fulfilled in the hoſannahs of the multitude, than in the meekneſs wherewith he received them, lowly and ſitting upon an aſs.—How could a diſciple fail of profiting by the example of ſo humble a maſter, whoſe whole courſe of life was a particular lecture to this virtue, and, in every inſtance of it, ſhewed plainly he came not to ſhare the pride and glories of life, or gratify the carnal expectation of ambitious followers; which, had he affected external pomp, he might have accompliſhed, by engroſſing, as he could have done by a word, all the riches of the world; and by the ſplendour of his court, and dignity of his perſon, had been greater than Solomon

in

in all his glory, and have attracted the applauſe and admiration of the world:—this every diſciple knew was in his power;—ſo that the meanneſs of his birth,—the toils and poverty of his life,—the low offices in which he was engaged, by preaching the goſpel to the poor—the numberleſs dangers and inconveniencies attending the execution,—were all voluntary.—This humble choice both of friends and family out of the meaneſt of the people,—amongſt whom he appeared rather as a ſervant than a maſter, coming not, as he often told them, to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter,—and as the prophet had foretold in that mournful deſcription of him, having no form nor comelineſs, nor any beauty that we ſhould deſire him.—

How could a diſciple, you'll ſay, reflect without benefit on this amiable character, with all the other tender pathetic proofs of humility, which his memory would ſuggeſt had happened of a piece with it, in the courſe of his Maſter's life;—but particularly at the concluſion and great cataſtrophe of it,—at his crucifixion; the impreſſions of which could never be forgotten.—When a life full of ſo many engaging inſtances of humility, was crowned with the moſt endearing one of humbling himſelf to the death of the croſs,—the death of a ſlave and a malefactor,—ſuffering himſelf to be led like a lamb to the ſlaughter,—dragged to Calvary without oppoſition or complaint, and as a ſheep be-

fore his ſhearer is dumb, opening not his mouth.—

O bleſſed Jeſus! well might a diſciple of thine learn of thee to be meek and lowly of heart, as thou exhortedſt them all, for thou waſt meek and lowly:—well might they profit, when ſuch a leſſon was ſeconded by ſuch an example!—It is not to be doubted what force this muſt have had on the actions of thoſe who were attendants and conſtant followers of our Saviour on earth;—ſaw the meekneſs of his temper in the occurrences of his life, and the amazing proof of it at his death, who, though he was able to call down legions of angels to his reſcue, or by a ſingle act of omnipotence to have deſtroyed his enemies; yet ſuppreſſed his almighty power,—neither reſented—or revenged the indignity done him, but patiently ſuffered himſelf to be numbered with the tranſgreſſors.—

It could not well be otherwiſe, but that every eye-witneſs of this muſt have been wrought upon, in ſome degree, as the apoſtle, to let the ſame mind be in him which alſo was in Chriſt Jeſus. Nor will it be diſputed how much of the honour of St. Peter's behaviour in the preſent tranſaction might be owing to the impreſſions he received on that memorable occaſion of his Lord's death, ſinking ſtill deeper, from the affecting remembrance of the many inſtances his maſter had given of this engaging virtue in the courſe of his life.—

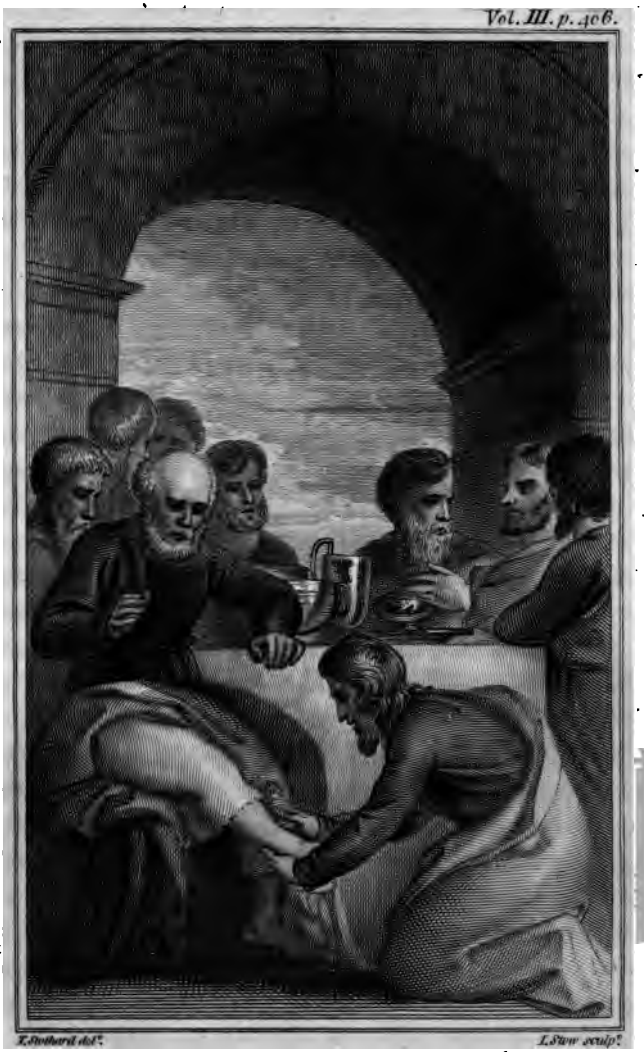
St. Peter

St. Peter certainly was of a warm and ſenſible nature, as we may collect from the ſacred writings,—a temper fitteſt to receive all the advantages which ſuch impreſſions could give;—and therefore, as it is a day and place ſacred to this great apoſtle, it may not be unacceptable, if I engage the remainder of your time, in a ſhort eſſay upon his character, principally as it relates to this particular diſpoſition of heart, which is the ſubject of the diſcourſe.—

This great apoſtle was a man of diſtinction amongſt the diſciples,—and was one of ſuch virtues and qualifications, as ſeemed to have recommended him more than the advantage of his years, or knowledge.—

On his firſt admiſſion to our Saviour's acquaintance, he gave a moſt evident teſtimony that he was a man of real and tender goodneſs, when being awakened by the miraculous draught of the fiſhes, as we read in the fifth of St. Luke, and knowing the author muſt neceſſarily be from God, he fell down inſtantly at his feet,—broke out into this humble and pious reflection;—"Depart from me, "for I am a ſinful man, O Lord!"—The cenſure, you will ſay, expreſſes him a ſinful man,—but ſo to cenſure himſelf,—with ſuch unaffected modeſty, implies more effectually than any thing elſe could,—that he was not in the common ſenſe of the word,—a ſinful, but a good man, who, like the publican in the temple, was no leſs juſtified, for a ſelf-accuſation, extorted merely from the humi-

lity of a devout heart jealous of its own imperfections.—And though the words, *depart from me*, carry in them the face of fear,—yet he who heard them, and knew the heart of the ſpeaker, found they carried in them a greater meaſure of deſire.—For Peter was not willing to be diſcharged from his new gueſt, but fearing his unfitneſs to accompany him, longed to be made more worthy of his converſation.—A meek and modeſt diſtruſt of himſelf ſeemed to have had no ſmall ſhare, at that time, in his natural temper and complexion; and though it would be greatly improved, and no doubt much better principled by the advantages on which I enlarged above, in his commerce and obſervation with his Lord and Maſter,—yet it appears to have been an early and diſtinguiſhing part of his character.—An inſtance of this, though little in itſelf, and omitted by the other evangeliſts, is preſerved by St. John, in his account of our Saviour's girding himſelf with a napkin, and waſhing the diſciples feet; to which office not one of them is repreſented as making any oppoſition: But when he came to Simon Peter,—the Evangeliſt tells,—Peter ſaid to him,—Doſt *Thou* waſh my feet? Jeſus ſaid unto him, What I do, thou knoweſt not now, but ſhalt know hereafter.—Peter ſaid unto him,—Thon ſhalt never waſh my feet.—Humility for a moment triumphed over his ſubmiſſion,—and he expoſtulates with him upon it, with all the earneſt and tender oppoſition which was natural to a humble heart, confounded



T. Stothard del.t. T. Starr sculp.t

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founded with ſhame, that his Lord and Maſter ſhould inſiſt to do ſo mean and painful an act of ſervitude to him—

I would ſooner form a judgment of a man's temper, from his behaviour on ſuch little occurrences of life as theſe, than from the more weighed and important actions, where a man is more upon his guard;—has more preparation to diſguiſe the true diſpoſition of his heart,—and more temptation when diſguiſed to impoſe it on others.—

This management was no part of Peter's character, who, with all the real and unaffected humility which he ſhewed, was poſſeſſed of ſuch a quick ſenſibility and promptneſs of nature, which utterly unfitted him for art and premeditation;—though this particular caſt of temper had its diſadvantages, at the ſame time, as it led him to an unreſerved diſcovery of the opinions and prejudices of his heart, which he was wont to declare, and ſometimes in ſo open and unguarded a manner, as expoſed him to the ſharpneſs of a rebuke where he could leaſt bear it.—

I take notice of this, becauſe it will help us in ſome meaſure to reconcile a ſeeming contradiction in his character, which will naturally occur here, from conſidering that great and capital failing of his life, when, by a preſumptuous declaration of his own fortitude, he fell into the diſgrace of denying his Lord; in both of which he acted ſo oppoſite to the character here given, that you will aſk,—How could ſo humble a man as

you deſcribe ever have been guilty of ſo ſelf-ſufficient and unguarded a vaunt, as that, though he ſhould die with his Maſter,—yet would he not deny him?—Or whence,—that ſo ſincere and honeſt a man was not better able to perform it?—

The caſe was this—

Our Lord, before he was betrayed, had taken occaſion to admoniſh his diſciples of the peril of lapſing,—telling them, 31ſt verſe,—All ye ſhall be offended becauſe of me this night.—To which Peter anſwering, with a zeal mixed with too much confidence,—That though all ſhould be offended, yet will I *never be offended*;—to check this truſt in himſelf,—our Saviour replies, that he in particular ſhould deny him *thrice*.—But Peter looking upon this monition no farther than as it applied a reproach to his faith, and his love, and his courage;—ſtung to the heart to have them called in queſtion by his Lord,—he haſtily ſummons them all up to form his final reſolution,—Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.—The reſolve was noble and dutiful to the laſt degree,—and I make no doubt as honeſt a one—that is, both as juſt in the matter, and as ſincere in the intention, as ever was made by any of mankind; his character not ſuffering us to imagine he made it in a braving diſſimulation:—no;—for he proved himſelf ſufficiently in earneſt by his ſubſequent behaviour in the garden, when he drew his ſword againſt a whole band of men, and thereby made it appear,

pear, that he had leſs concern for his own life than he had for his Maſter's ſafety.—How then came his reſolution to miſcarry?—The reaſon ſeems purely this:—Peter grounded the execution of it upon too much confidence in himſelf,—doubted not but his will was in his power, whether God's grace aſſiſted him or not;—ſurely thinking, that what he had courage to reſolve ſo honeſtly, he had likewiſe ability to perform.—This was his miſtake,—and though it was a very great one,—yet it was in ſome degree a-kin to a virtue,—as it ſprung merely from a conſciouſneſs of his integrity and truth, and too adventurous a concluſion of what they would enable him to perform, on the ſharpeſt encounters for his Maſter's ſake:—ſo that his failing in this point, was but a conſequence of this haſty and ill-conſidered reſolve;—and his Lord, to rebuke and puniſh him for it, did no other than leave him to his own ſtrength to perform it;—which, in effect, was almoſt the ſame as leaving him to the neceſſity of not performing it at all.—The great apoſtle had not conſidered, that he who precautioned him was the ſearcher of hearts,—and needed not that any ſhould teſtify of man, for he knew what was in man;—he did not remember, that his Lord had ſaid before,—Without me ye can do nothing;—that the exertions of all our faculties were under the power of his will:—he had forgot the knowledge of this needful truth, on this one unhappy juncture,—where he had ſo great a temptation to the

the contrary—though he was full of the perſuaſion in every other tranſaction of his life;—but moſt viſibly here in the text,—where he breaks forth in the warm language of a heart ſtill overflowing with remembrance of this very miſtake he had once committed;—Ye men of Iſrael, why marvel ye at this?—as though by our own power and holineſs we had wrought this?—the God of Abraham, of Iſaac, and of Jacob,—the God of our fathers, through faith in his name, hath made this man whole, whom ye ſee and know.—

This is the beſt anſwer I am able to make to this objection againſt the uniformity of the apoſtle's character which I have given:—upon which let it be added,—that was no ſuch apology capable of being made in its behalf;—that the truth and regularity of a character is not, in juſtice, to be looked upon as broken, from any one ſingle act or omiſſion which may ſeem a contradiction to it:—the beſt of men appear ſometimes to be ſtrange compounds of contradictory qualities: and, were the accidental overſights and folly of the wiſeſt man,—the failings and imperfections of a religious man,—the haſty acts and paſſionate words of a meek man—were they to riſe up in judgment againſt them,—and an ill-natured judge be ſuffered to mark in this manner what has been done amiſs—what character ſo unexceptionable as to be able to ſtand before him?—So that, with the candid allowances which the infirmities of a man may claim when he falls through ſurpriſe

more

more than a premeditation,—one may venture upon the whole to ſum up Peter's character in a few words.—He was a man ſenſible in his nature,—of quick paſſions, tempered with the greateſt humility and moſt unaffected poverty of ſpirit that ever met in ſuch a character.—So that in the only criminal inſtance of his life, which I have ſpoken to, you are at a loſs which to admire moſt;—the tenderneſs and ſenſibility of his ſoul, in being wrought upon to repentance by a look from Jeſus;—or the uncommon humility of it, which he teſtified thereupon, in the bitterneſs of his ſorrow for what he had done.—He was once preſumptuous in truſting to his own ſtrength; his general and true character was that of the moſt engaging meekneſs,—diſtruſtful of himſelf and his abilities to the laſt degree.——

He denied his maſter.—But in all inſtances of his life, but that, was a man of the greateſt truth and ſincerity;—to which part of his character, our Saviour has given an undeniable teſtimony, in conferring on him the ſymbolical name of Cephas, a rock, a name the moſt expreſſive of conſtancy and firmneſs.—

He was a man of great love to his maſter—and of no leſs zeal for his religion, of which, from among many, I ſhall take one inſtance out of St. John, with which I ſhall conclude this account,—Where, upon the deſertion of ſeveral other diſciples,—our Saviour puts the queſtion to the twelve,—Will ye alſo go away?—Then, ſays the text, Peter anſwered

anſwered and ſaid,—Lord! whither ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life, and we believe, and know, that thou art Chriſt the ſon of God.—Now, if we look into the Goſpel, we find what our Saviour pronounced on this very confeſſion.

Bleſſed art thou, Simon Barjona, for fleſh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,—but my Father which is in heaven.—That our Saviour had the words of eternal life,—Peter was able to deduce from principles of natural reaſon; becauſe reaſon was able to judge from the internal marks of his doctrine, that it was worthy God, and accommodated properly to advance human nature and human happineſs.—But for all this,—reaſon could not infallibly determine that the meſſenger of this doctrine was the Meſſias, the eternal Son of the living God:—to know this required an illumination;—and this illumination, I ſay, ſeems to have been vouchſafed at that inſtant as a reward,—as would have been ſufficient evidence by itſelf of the diſpoſition of his heart.——

I have now finiſhed this ſhort eſſay upon the character of St. Peter, not with a loud panegyric upon the power of his keys, or a ranting encomium upon ſome monaſtic qualifications, with which a popiſh pulpit would ring upon ſuch an occaſion, without doing much honour to the ſaint, or good to the audience:—but have drawn it with truth and ſobriety, repreſenting it as it was, as conſiſting of virtues the moſt worthy of imitation,

—and grounded, not upon apocryphal accounts and legendary inventions, the wardrobe from whence popery dreſſes out her ſaints on theſe days,—but upon matters of fact in the ſacred Scriptures, in which all Chriſtians agree.——And ſince I have mentioned *popery*, I cannot better conclude than by obſerving, how ill the ſpirit and character of that church reſembles that particular part of St. Peter's which has been made the ſubject of this diſcourſe.——Would one think that a church, which thruſts itſelf under this apoſtle's patronage, and claims her power under him, would preſume to exceed the degrees of it, which he acknowledged to poſſeſs himſelf?—But how ill are your expectations anſwered, when, inſtead of the humble declaration in the text,——Ye men of Iſrael, marvel not at us, as if our own power and holineſs had wrought this;——you hear a language and behaviour from the Romiſh court, as oppoſite to it as inſolent words and actions can frame.——

So that inſtead of, Ye men of Iſrael, marvel not at us,——Ye men of Iſrael, *do* marvel at us,—hold us in admiration:——Approach our ſacred pontiff——(who is not only holy——but holineſs itſelf)—approach his perſon with reverence, and deem it the greateſt honour and happineſs of your lives to fall down before his chair, and be admitted to kiſs his feet.——

Think not, as if it were not our own holineſs which merits all the homage you can

can pay us.—It is our own holineſs,—the ſuperabundance of it, of which, having more than we know what to do with ourſelves,—from works of ſupererogation, we have tranſferred the ſurplus in eccleſiaſtic warehouſes, and, in pure zeal for the good of your ſouls, have eſtabliſhed public banks of merit, ready to be drawn upon at all times.——

Think not, ye men of Iſrael, or ſay within yourſelves, that we are unprofitable ſervants; we have no good works to ſpare, or that if we had—we cannot make this uſe of them; —that we have no power to circulate our indulgencies,—and huckſter them out, as we do, through all the parts of Chriſtendom.—

Know ye by theſe preſents, that it is our own power which does this,—the plenitude of our apoſtolic power operating with our own holineſs, that enables us to bind and looſe, as ſeems meet to us on earth;——to ſave your ſouls or deliver them up to Satan, and, as they pleaſe or diſpleaſe, to indulge whole kingdoms at once, or excommunicate them all;——binding kings in chains, and your nobles in links of iron.——

That we may never again feel the effects of ſuch language and principles,——may God of his mercy grant us. Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

THIRTIETH OF JANUARY.

EZRA, ix. 6, 7.

And I ſaid, O my God, I am aſhamed and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, my God:—for our iniquities are increaſed over our head, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the heavens.—Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great treſpaſs unto this day.—

THERE is not, I believe, throughout all hiſtory, an inſtance of ſo ſtrange and obſtinately corrupt a people as the Jews, of whom Ezra complains; for though on one hand, —there never was a people that received ſo many teſtimonies of God's favour to encourage them to be good,—ſo, on the other hand, there never was a people which ſo often felt the ſcourge of their iniquities to diſhearten them from doing evil.—Yet neither the one or the other ſeemed ever able to make them either the wiſer or better;—neither God's bleſſings, nor his corrections, could ever ſoften them;—they ſtill continued a thankleſs unthinking people,—who profited by no leſſons, neither were to be won with mercies, nor terrified with puniſhments,—but on every ſucceeding trial and occaſion, extremely diſpoſed againſt God, to go aſtray and act wickedly.

In the words of the text, the prophet's heart overflows with ſorrow, upon his reflec-

tion

tion of this unworthy part of their character; and the manner of his application to God is ſo expreſſive of his humble ſenſe of it,—and there is ſomething in the words ſo full of tenderneſs and ſhame for them upon that ſcore, —as beſpeaks the moſt paternal, as well as paſtoral concern for them.—And he ſaid,—O my God! I am aſhamed,—and bluſh to lif up my face to thee, my God.—No doubt the holy man was confounded to look back upon that long ſeries of ſo many of God's undeſerved mercies to them, of which they had made ſo bad and ungrateful a uſe: he conſidered, that they had all the motives that could lay reſtraints either upon a conſiderate or a reaſonable people;—that God had not only created, upheld, and favoured them with all advantages in common with the reſt of their fellow-creatures—but had been particularly kind to them; that when they were in the houſe of bondage, in the moſt hopeleſs condition,—he had heard their cry and took compaſſion upon their afflictions, and by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, had ſet them free from the yoke of oppreſſion. —The prophet, no doubt, reflected at the ſame time, that, beſides this inſtance of God's goodneſs in firſt favouring their miraculous eſcape, a ſeries of ſucceſſes not to be accounted for from ſecond cauſes, and the natural courſe of events, had crowned their heads in ſo remarkable a manner, as to afford an evident proof, not only of God's general concern, but of his particular providence and

and attachment to them above all people: —in the wilderneſs he led them like ſheep, and kept them as the apple of his eye;—he ſuffered no man to do them wrong,—but reproved even kings for their ſake;—that when they entered into the promiſed land, no force was able to ſtand before them;—when in poſſeſſion,—no army was ever able to drive them out;—that nations greater and mightier than they, were thruſt forth from before them:—that, in a word, all nature for a time was driven backwards by the hands of God, to ſerve them, and that even the Sun itſelf had ſtood ſtill in the midſt of heaven, to ſecure their victories;—that when all theſe mercies were caſt away upon them,—and no principle of gratitude or intereſt could make them an obedient people,—God had tried by misfortunes to bring them back;—that when inſtructions, warnings, invitations, miracles, prophets, and holy guides, had no effect,—he at laſt ſuffered them to reap the wages of their folly, by letting them fall again into the ſame ſtate of bondage in Babylon, from whence he had firſt raiſed them. Here it is that Ezra pours out his confeſſion. It is no ſmall aggravation to Ezra's concern, to find that even this laſt trial had no good effect upon their conduct;—that all the alternatives of promiſes and threats, comforts and afflictions, inſtead of making them grow the better, made them apparently grow the worſe: how could he intercede for them, but with ſhame and ſorrow; —and ſay, as in the text, -- O my God, I am

aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, for our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the heavens;—ſince the days of our fathers have we been in a great treſpaſs unto this day.

Thus much for the prophet's humble confeſſion to God for the Jews, for which he had but too juſt a foundation given by them;—and I know not how I can make a better uſe of the words, as the occaſion of the day led me to the choice of them,—than by a ſerious application of the ſame ſad confeſſion, in regard to ourſelves.—

Our fathers, like thoſe of the Jews in Ezra's time,—no doubt have done amiſs, and greatly provoked God by their violence;—but if our own iniquities, like theirs, are increaſed over our heads;—if ſince the days of our fathers we have been in great treſpaſs ourſelves unto this day,—'tis fit this day we ſhould be put in mind of it;—nor can the time and occaſion be better employed, than in hearing with patience the reproofs which ſuch a parallel will lead me to give.

It muſt be acknowledged, there is no nation which had ever ſo many extraordinary reaſons and ſupernatural motives, to become thankful and virtuous as the Jews had;—yet at the ſame time, there is no one which has not ſufficient (and ſetting aſide at preſent the conſideration of a future ſtate as a reward for being ſo)—there is no nation under heaven, which, beſides the daily bleſſings of God's pro-

providence to them, but have received ſufficient bleſſings and mercies at the hands of God to engage their beſt ſervices, and the warmeſt returns of gratitude they can pay: —there has been a time, may be, when they have been delivered from ſome grievous calamity,—from the rage of peſtilence or famine,—from the edge and fury of the ſword, —from the fate and fall of kingdoms round them;—they may have been preſerved by providential diſcoveries, from plots and deſigns againſt the well-being of their ſtates,— or by critical turns and revolutions in their favour when beginning to ſink;—by ſome ſignal interpoſition of God's providence;— they may have reſcued their liberties, and all that was dear to them, from the jaws of ſome tyrant;—or may have preſerved their religion pure and uncorrupted, when all other comforts failed them.

If other countries have reaſon to be thankful to God for any one of theſe mercies, much more has *this* of ours, which at one time or other hath received them all;—inſomuch that our hiſtory, for this laſt century, has ſcarce been any thing elſe but the hiſtory of our deliverances, and God's bleſſings,—and theſe in ſo complicated a chain, and with ſo little interruption,—as to be ſcarce ever vouchſafed to any nation or language beſides —except the Jews;—and with regard to them, though inferior in the ſtupendous manner of their working,—yet no way ſo in the extenſive goodneſs of their effects, and the infinite be-

nevolence which muſt have wrought them for us.—Here then let us ſtop and look back a moment, and enquire, as in the caſe of the Jews, what great effects all this has had upon our lives,—and how far worthy we have lived —of what we have received?

A ſtranger—when he heard that this iſland had been ſo favoured by Heaven,—ſo happy in our laws and religion,—ſo flouriſhing in our trade,—ſo bleſſed in our ſituation and natural product,—and in all of them ſo often —ſo viſibly protected by Providence,—would conclude, our gratitude and morals had kept pace with our bleſſings;—and he would ſay, —as we are the moſt bleſſed and favoured,— that we muſt be the moſt virtuous and religious people upon the face of the earth.

Would to God! there was any other reaſon to incline one to ſo charitable a belief;— for, without running into any common-place declamation upon the wickedneſs of the age, —we may ſay within the bounds of truth,— that we have profited in this reſpect as little as was poſſible for the Jews;—that there is as little virtue,—and as little ſenſe of religion, at leaſt as little of the appearance of it, as can be ſuppoſed to exiſt at all, in a country where it is countenanced by the ſtate.—Our forefathers, whatever greater degrees of real virtue they were poſſeſſed of— God,—who ſearcheth the heart,—beſt knows; —but this is certain, in their days they had at leaſt—the form of godlineſs,—and paid this compliment to religion, as to wear at leaſt the appearance and outward garb of it.

it.—The public ſervice of God was better frequented,—and in a devout as well as regular manner;—there was no open profaneneſs in our ſtreets to put piety to the bluſh,—or domeſtic ridicule, to make her uneaſy, and force her to withdraw.

Religion, though treated with freedom, was ſtill treated with reſpect;—the youth of both ſexes kept under greater reſtraint;—good order and good hours were then kept up in moſt families; and, in a word, a greater ſtrictneſs and ſobriety of manners maintained throughout amongſt people of all ranks and conditions;—ſo that vice, however ſecretly it might be practiſed,—was aſhamed to be ſeen.—

But all this has inſenſibly been borne down, ever ſince the days of our forefathers treſpaſs—when, to avoid one extreme, we began to run into another;—ſo that, inſtead of any great religion amongſt us, you ſee thouſands who are tired even of the form of it, and who have at length thrown the maſk of it aſide,—as an uſeleſs incumbrance.—

But this licentiouſneſs, he would ſay, may be chiefly owing to a long courſe of proſperity, which is apt to corrupt men's minds.—God has ſince this tried you with afflictions;—you have been viſited with a long and expenſive war:—God has ſent, moreover, a peſtilence amongſt your cattle, which has cut off the flock from the fold,—and left no herd in the ſtalls.—Surely, he'll ſay,—two ſuch terrible

terrible ſcourges muſt have awakened the conſciences of the moſt unthinking part of you, and forced the inhabitants of your lands —from ſuch admonitions—though they failed with the Jews, to have learnt righteouſneſs for themſelves.—

I own this is the natural effect,— and one would hope ſhould always be the natural uſe and improvement from ſuch calamities ;—for we often find that numbers who, in proſperity, ſeem to forget God, do yet remember him in the day of trouble and diſtreſs.—Yet conſider this nationally,—we ſee no ſuch effect from it in fact, as one would be led to expect from the ſpeculation :—for inſtance,—with all the devaſtation, bloodſhed, and expence which the war has occaſioned,—how many converts has it made to frugality,—to virtue, or even to ſerioufneſs itſelf?—The peſtilence amongſt our cattle,—though it has diſtreſſed and utterly undone ſo many thouſands, yet what one viſible alteration has it made in the courſe of our lives?—

And though one would imagine that the neceſſary drains of taxes for the one,—and the loſs of rents and property from the other, ſhould in ſome meaſure have withdrawn the means of gratifying our paſſions, as we have done ;—yet what appearance is there amongſt us that it is ſo?—

What one faſhionable folly or extravagance has been checked by it?—Is not there the ſame luxury and epicuriſm of entertainments at

at our tables?—do we not purſue with eagerneſs the ſame giddy round of trifling diverſions —is not the infection diffuſed amongſt people of all ranks, and all ages?—And even grey hairs whoſe ſober example and manners ought to check the extravagant ſallies of the thoughtleſs, gay, and unexperienced,—too often totter under the ſame coſtly ornaments, and join the general riot. Where vanity, like this, governs the heart, even charity will allow us to ſuppoſe, that a conſciouſneſs of their inability to purſue greater exceſſes, is the only vexation of ſpirit.—In truth the obſervation falls in with the main intention of the diſcourſe,—which is not framed to flatter your follies,—but plainly to point them out, and ſhew you the general corruption of manners, and want of religion; which all men ſee,—and which the wiſe and good ſo much lament.—

But the inquirer will naturally go on, and ſay, that though this repreſentation does not anſwer his expectations, that undoubtedly we muſt have profited by theſe leſſons in other reſpects;—that though we have not approved our underſtanding in the ſight of God, by a virtuous uſe of our misfortunes, to true wiſdom;—that we muſt have improved them, however, to political wiſdom;—ſo that he would ſay,—though the Engliſh do not appear to be a religious people,—they are at leaſt a loyal one:—they have ſo often felt the ſcourge of rebellion, and have taſted ſo much ſharp fruit from it,—as to have ſet their teeth on

on edge for ever.—But, good God! how would he be aſtoniſhed to find, that though we have been ſo often toſt to and fro by our own tempeſtuous humours,—that we were not yet ſick of the ſtorm;—that though we ſolemnly, on every return of this day, lament the guilt of our forefathers in ſtaining their hands in blood,—we never once think of our principles and practices, which tend the ſame way:—and though the providence of God has ſet bounds, that they do not work as much miſchief,—as in days of diſtraction and deſolation,—little reaſon have we to aſcribe the merit thereof to our own wiſdom;—ſo that, when the whole account is ſtated betwixt us,—there ſeems nothing to prevent the application of the words in the text;—that our iniquities are encreaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſs is grown up unto the the heaven.—Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great treſpaſs unto this day!—and though it is fit and becoming that we weep for them,—'tis much more ſo, that we weep for ourſelves,—that we lament our own corruptions,—and the little advantages we have made of the mercies or chaſtiſements of God, or from the ſins and provocations of our forefathers.—

This is the fruit we are to gather, in a day of ſuch humiliation;—and unleſs it produces that for us, by a reformation of our manners, and by turning us from the error of our ways, the ſervice of this day is more a ſenſe-

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leſs inſult upon the memories of our anceſtors,—than an honeſt deſign to profit by their miſtakes and misfortunes,—and to become wiſer and better from our reflections upon them.—

Till this is done, it avails little, though we pray fervently to God not to lay their ſins to our charge—whilſt we have ſo many remaining of our own.—Unleſs we are touched for ourſelves, how can we expect he ſhould hear our cry? It is the wicked corruption of a people which they are to thank for whatever natural calamities they feel;—this is the very ſtate we are in—which by diſengaging Providence from taking our part,—will always leave a people expoſed to the whole force of accidents, both from within and without:—and however ſtateſmen may diſpute about the cauſes of the growth or decay of kingdoms,—it is for this cauſe, a matter of eternal truth,—that as virtue and religion are our only recommendation to God,—that they are, conſequently, the only true baſis of our happineſs and proſperity on earth.—And however we may ſhelter ourſelves under diſtinctions of party,—that a wicked man is the worſt enemy the ſtate has;—and for the contrary, it will always be found, that a virtuous man is the beſt patriot, and the beſt ſubject the king has.—And though an individual may ſay, what will my righteouſneſs profit a nation of men?—I anſwer,—if it fail of a bleſſing here (which is not likely), it will

have

have one advantage—it will ſave thy own ſoul, and give thee that peace at the laſt, which this world cannot take away.

Which God, of his infinite mercy, grant us all. Amen.

END OF VOL. III.

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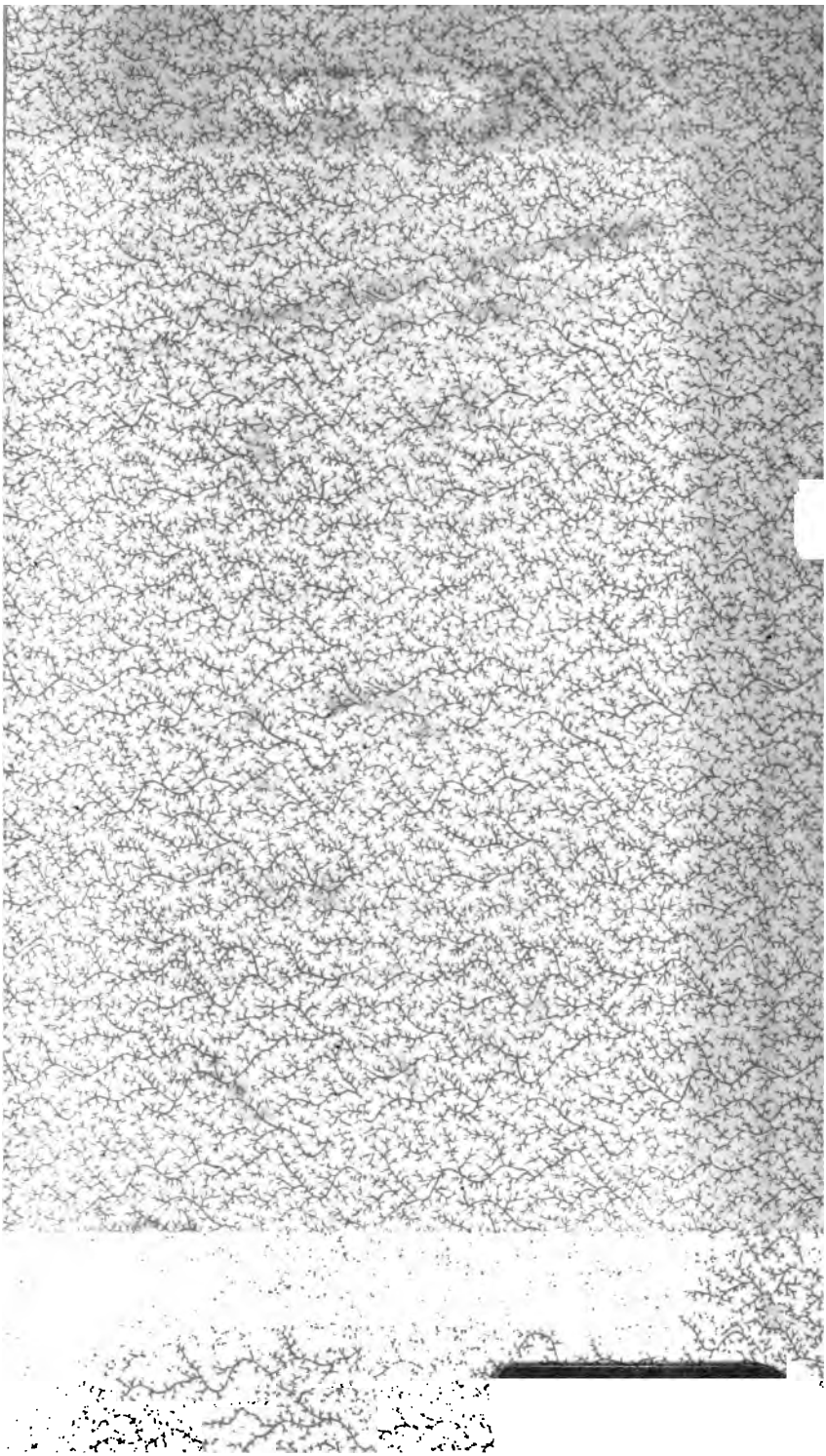
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